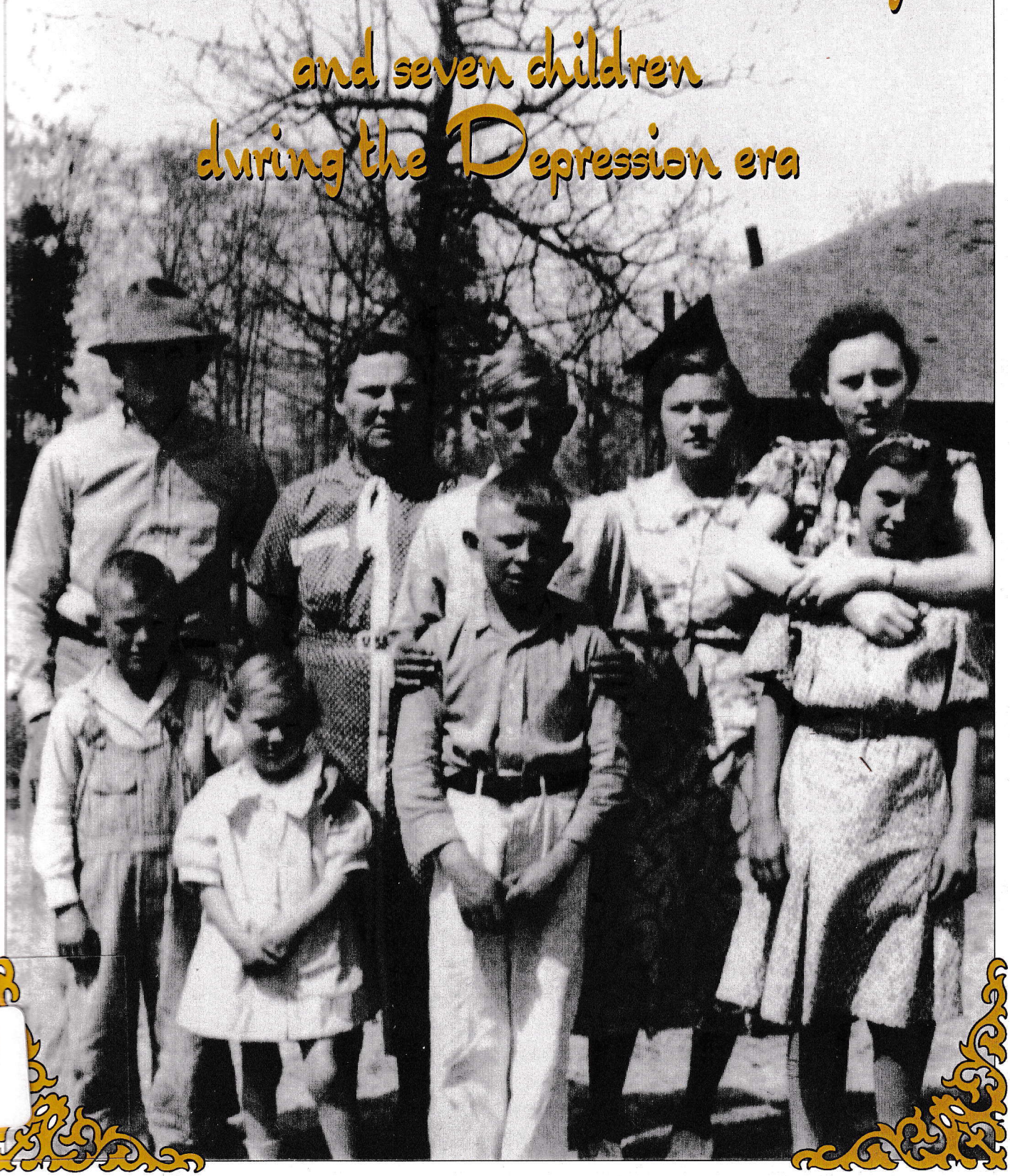
# Memories of Ben and Cora Nelms Family and seven children during the Depression era



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ORIES

# Loving Memories of the Nelms Family

*This collection of family memories*
*is a gift to you from the heart*
*of Bill Nelms, your brother.*
*April 1999*

## *Ben and Cora Nelms*

*Bertie ~ April 1, 1915*
*Larie ~ October 14, 1918*
*Raymond ~ September 26, 1920*
*Doris ~ December 2, 1923*
*Clarence ~ July 8, 1926*
*Billy ~ September 21, 1929*
*Christine ~ April 11, 1932*

*Aliene ~ died in infancy*

8 children
18 grandchildren
25 great-grandchildren
19 great-great-grandchildren

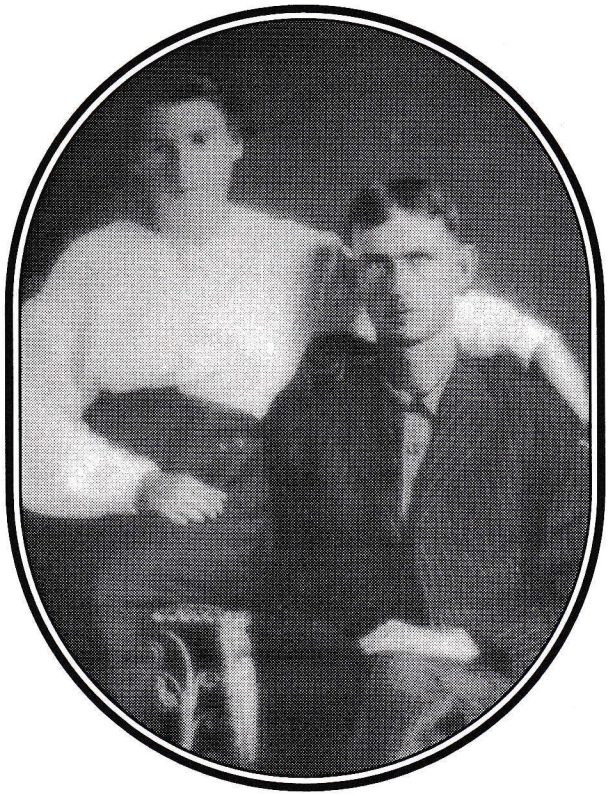
G-AR 00-1240
929 Memories of Ben and Cora
MEM Nelms Family and seven
children during the
Depression era.

*Front Cover*
*Back row – Ben, Cora, Raymond, Larie, Bertie.*
*Front row – Bill, Christine, Clarence, Doris.*

*J.C. and Georgia Higginbotham*

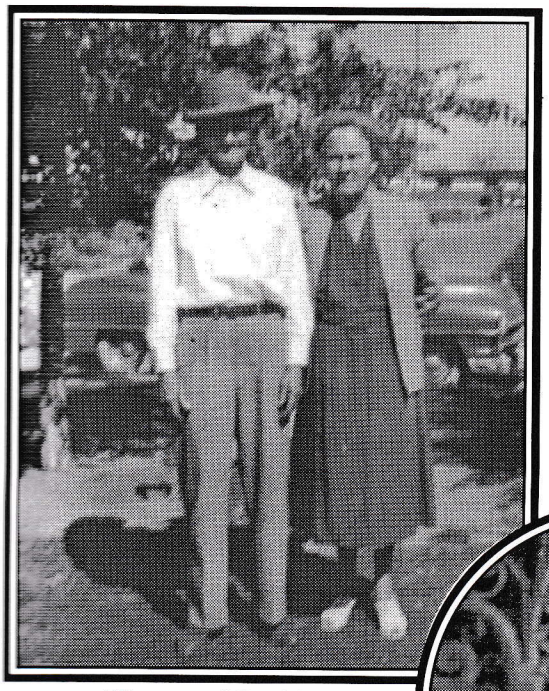
*Mollie Nelms*
*Born 11-1-1855 — Died 4-28-1928*
*Thomas Nelms*
*Born 10-14-1841 — Died 1-27-1916*

*J.C. and Georgia Higginbotham Family*

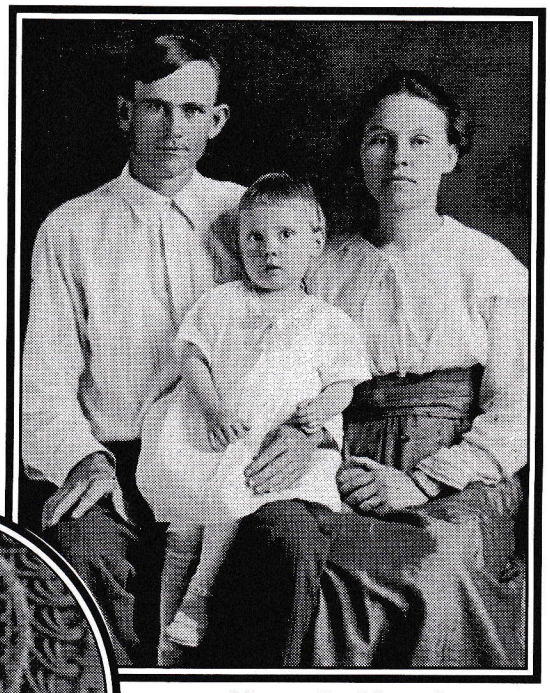


*Uncle Joe and Aunt Ora Nelms*

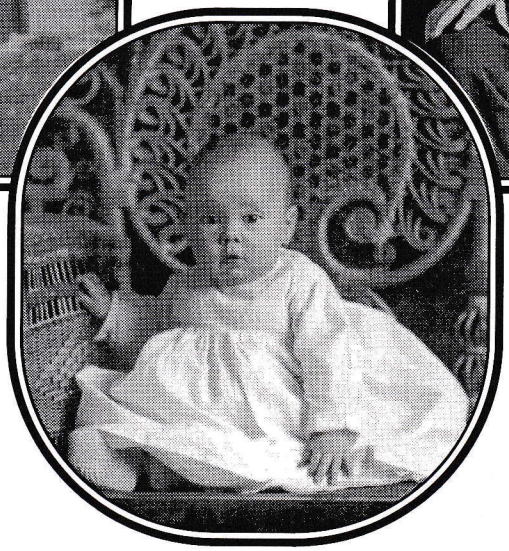
*Mama with Brothers and Sisters*



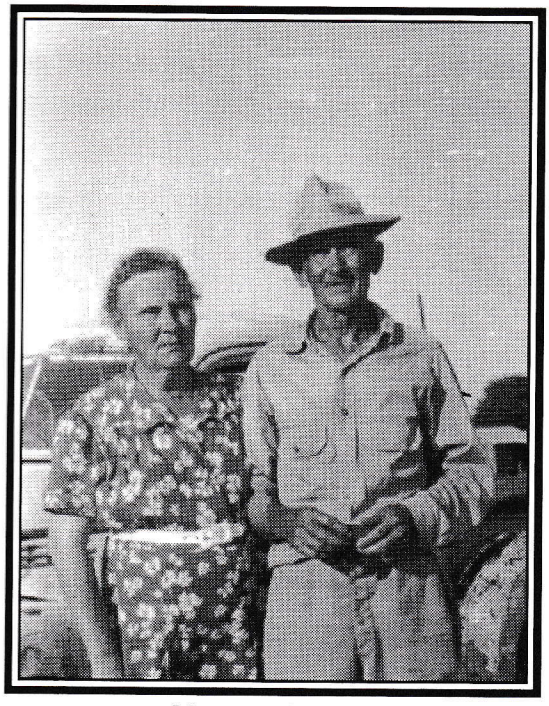
*Mama and Daddy*



*Mama, Daddy and Bertie Adean*

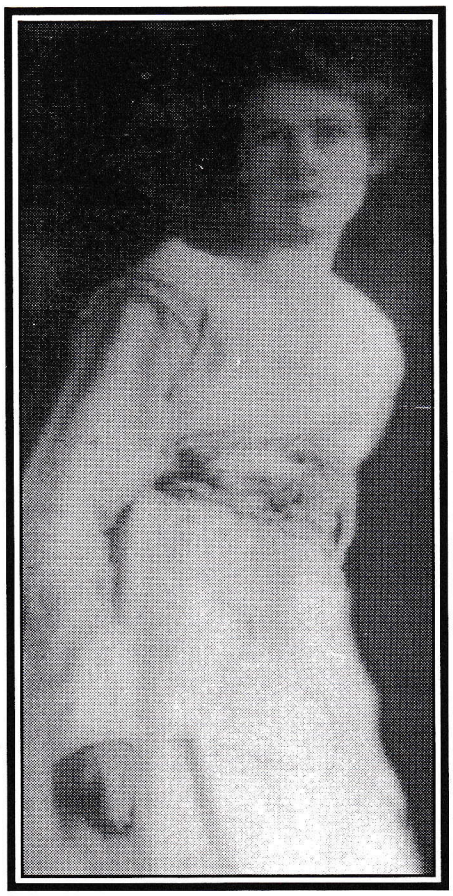


*Bertie*



*Mama and Daddy*

*Henry Burgess, Frank Waits, Ruth & Lorene Waits, Bertie Nelms, Cousin Inez Nelms*



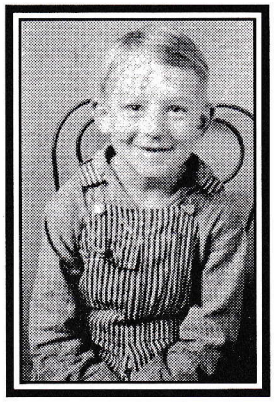
*Aunt Maggie Nelms*

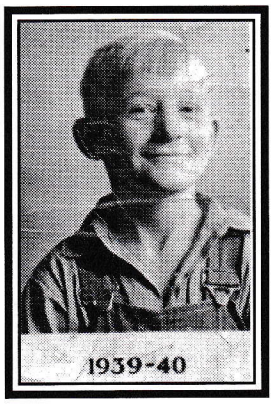
*Aunt Ora Nelms, 18 years old during the World War I flu epidemic*

*She was the only one that was able to take care of all of the Nelms family.*

*Seven children*

# Billy Nelms






I am the number six out of seven children and the youngest boy. I have two older brothers, three older sisters and one younger sister. While attending a Baptist retreat in New Mexico in 1994 and listening to Mr. Robert Hastings tell stories about the 1930's, I have decided to write about the Nelms family — Ben F. and Cora F. Nelms and how they were heroes because they faced the depression years head on and raised seven kids and all lived to tell the story. Like millions of other families, mom and dad sacrificed and made do with little or nothing. With the help of my four sisters and two brothers, I hope to show you, our kids, and our grandchildren how this family survived during those years, although my oldest brother passed away.

"The Great Depression Days," being the youngest boy, I can remember the hard times. In the middle 1930's, mom was the one to make sure we kids went to church when we could. Dad, I'm sure, had other things on his mind, such as making a living for his family. Dad was a sharecropper. I remember how well I recall living on the Cone place in Ashley County, South Arkansas. The Cone place was located eight miles north of Snyder, Arkansas. Snyder is located between Hamburg and Montrose, Arkansas off of Highway 82. We lived on the farm and the road had no gravel, just dirt. Sometimes, because of the road conditions, the mail carrier could not run, so mail would not come that day. The school bus would not run because of this. It only ran when weather permitted. I remember going to school in my overalls and most of the time we had shoes to wear, but during the summer months, we would go in our bare feet. I can remember riding the school bus, and being the youngest, I would get to stay in the bus while my brothers and sisters would have to get out and push the bus through the mud and over the hill. I remember my oldest brother always would get behind the big bus wheels and the mud would be all over him. Sometimes, times were hard but mom and dad always provided for us kids. Daddy had very little education but he knew how to work and provide for his family. He could not read or write but was pretty good with numbers.

Daddy farmed with a team of mules furnished by the land owner. There were no tractors and only the well-to-do had cars and trucks. We went to town most of the time in the horse-drawn wagon or walked. Sometimes, we would use the wagon and team to go to church. Mom would take us Sunday night if the weather permitted. Mom always made that decision. It would take well over an hour to get to the church house. I remember mom had two or three Sunday dresses, most of them were homemade, some from store-bought flour sacks. Very few of the girls' dresses were store bought, most were made with needle and thread. There was very little money and no jobs in order to make money. People had to make do with what they could grow and save. Dad would get many things on credit and when the crop was gathered, he would settle up with the land owner. Most of the time, he would never get out of debt before he had to use his credit again. Sometimes he would make a good cotton crop, but most other people would too, so the cotton would not be worth too much. He never could move up because he would always be in debt and had to make sure his family had enough to eat. I know now this must have worried dad because he never knew how long his land owner would carry him over.

*Ben and Cora Nelms Family – 1950*

I remember riding to Snyder, approximately eight miles in a wagon and team with dad and my brother to get supplies. Sometimes it would take us all day long, and I would have a dime to spend that would buy a big RC Cola and a big bar of candy. It was worth the eight-hour trip. Dad would usually buy a big sack of flour, 50 lbs., and some salt and other ingredients that

mom had to have to feed us kids. I remember he would always bring a sack full of hard candy for the other kids. I would go to the railroad track and get two big pockets full of rocks so I would have something to shoot in my homemade sling shot made with dad's sharp knife. Sometimes, I would get a sack of marbles to play with.

You might ask, what did the Nelms family have to eat during the Great Depression? I can truly say I can never remember going to bed hungry. Mom always provided something to fill our tummies. It wasn't store bought, but it must have been good for us because all but one of the seven kids are still living. Raymond died of cancer in 1986. We always had cornbread and cold biscuits most of the time. Dad would always seem to have enough corn to help fatten the hogs and to shell for cornbread all year long. I remember shelling corn in the barn, picking the good ears and shelling them for him to take to the mill and get it ground into corn meal for corn bread. Mama had a flour barrel near the kitchen with 100 pounds of flour and a big barrel for the corn meal. I remember the potato house. When the potato crop was gathered, we would store it in the house, and keep a fire during the cold nights so the potatoes would not freeze. Dad would always have tame and wild hogs, so he would wait until the acorns would fall, and the hogs would get butter ball fat. This hog killing day was a very big day. Fresh pork chops and homemade biscuits I will never forget. Dad would kill several hogs. We would heat the water in Mama's wash pot. The water could not be too hot because the hair would be scraped and cleaned, tied to a tree limb. Mama would save just about everything. Dad would get the sides, hams, and shoulders and sugar cure each piece (this would keep the meat from spoiling), hang them in the smoke house and we would cut off what we needed for food. Mama would take the fat and other parts that would be boiled in a big pot to obtain the lard and make soap for the next time. We would kill hogs for lard. Dad would always have a cane field. I remember stripping the leaves from the stalk and cutting the stalks down and taking it to the sorghum mill to make syrup. I would usually keep the mule walking, grinding the cane juice in a big bucket. It would be poured into a big vat heated by pine knots and dry lumber. The skim from the syrup would be skimmed off and given to the hogs. Finally, the syrup would be ready to pour into new gallon cans. Mama would keep it on the back porch or in the closet near the kitchen. Mama would always can a lot of fruit and

*Like Mama's stove*

vegetables, sometimes several hundred jars. I remember Kerr and Ball jars were her favorite.

For heat, the Nelms family had only wood, usually cut with a cross cut saw and an ax. The winters were cold, but we survived in a house with no insulation, no trim around the doors or windows, no carpet or rugs on the floor. I cannot recall ever sleeping cold. Mama would always have plenty of quilts and covers to keep us warm. Sometimes we would sleep several in the same bed, but we didn't sleep cold. Most of the winter, we had Sears under-alls to help keep us warm. When dad would gather the crop, he would hunt wild hogs and trap until next time to start farming. This would help feed the family during the winter months. When he did find a job, he would leave home very early, drive his team to his work place and get home late at night. The next day would be the same. He would make very little money, but the work was hard and usually on the outside.

Most of the time, we always had fresh milk from Mama's two cows. Mama was always churning the milk to get the butter. If the milk and butter were not available, usually the neighbors would share. Back then, people helped people.

Blackberry picking time was shared by all the family. We would go in the fields early and pick gallons of blackberries. Mom would can and make jelly for the winter months. We also picked grapes for jam and jelly.

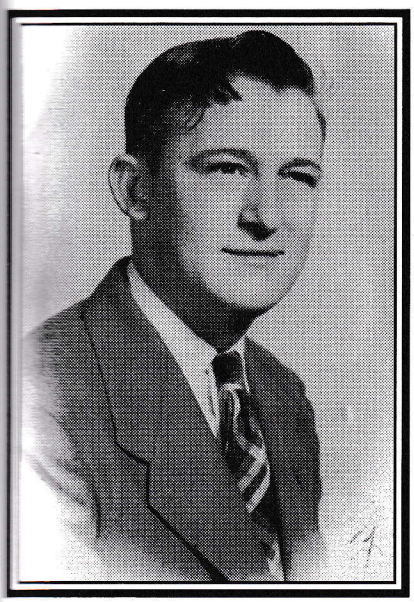
School days, I remember riding the school bus, sometimes catching it before daylight. Mom would have my paper bag with my lunch on the kitchen table.

There was no lunch room at the school, or no place to purchase anything to eat. Everyone had their paper bag lunch. Most of the time, I would have two biscuits, one with a big slice of country-cured ham and the other with jelly, and a baked potato most of the time. We had light bread on special occasions. Most of the time, my friend would swap his light bread peanut butter sandwich for my big ham biscuit. Now I know who got the best deal, but it was a change for me. After school, Mama would always have cold biscuits and baked potato left from breakfast, maybe a piece of ham left in the cabinet. Usually, we would eat left overs with corn bread and sweet milk for supper.

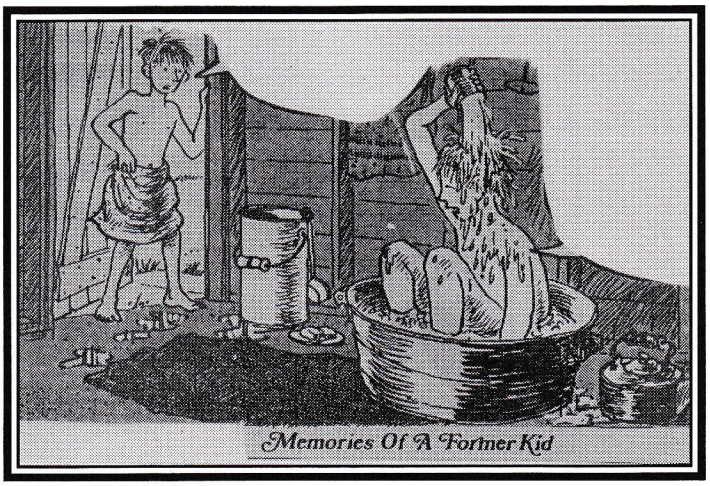
We didn't get to bathe every day, most likely once or twice a week in a No. 3 wash tub behind the kitchen stove where it was warm; most of the time after the girls had bathed in the same water. I would never wash my face, just my body.

My school years were short. I was a senior in high school before I started to school on time. I always had to stay off the first six weeks to gather the crops. I was always behind in my school work, but the teachers understood and would always help me to catch up. I don't remember staying in the same grade two years.

After supper, mom and dad would get on the front porch and sing the old songs until bedtime. No one could hear. Most of the neighbors were too far away. Christmas was a special time for us all. Dad would sometimes play Santa. At first we didn't know. Christmas would be special most of the time. We would all get an apple, orange, and maybe a toy, sometimes a homemade wagon made with wood wheels from a tree, but times were rough and money was not available. What little money we had was from daddy trapping. I remember on Christmas hearing mom and dad talking about what the kids were getting for Christmas. They had nothing. Dad ran his traps Christmas morning and brought home three mink. They were sold that day and we had toys for Christmas, and our apple, orange, and hard candy.

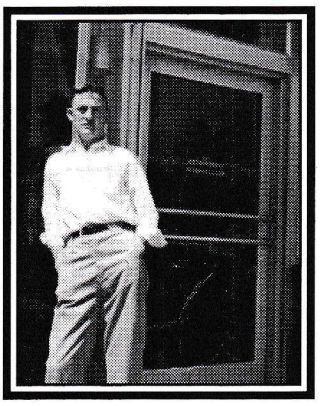


*Bill's graduation photo – 1948*




During the spring, I remember mom and dad really getting concerned about the weather. When a bad cloud would come up in the spring or fall, dad would usually let us know if it was going to be a bad night. At late afternoon, mom would always wake up us kids. She would wring her hands and pray. Sometimes, we would all be in a certain room, or a safe place in the house.

When I was about 11 or 12, mom and dad moved from the Cone place closer to town. This was near Thebes, about four miles east of Snyder, Southern Arkansas. I think dad made a crop or two and moved to a government home three miles east of Montrose, in Chicot County. I do not recall what type of loan dad got, but I'm sure it was the first good home that Mama ever had. I knew she was proud of it. I remember the pump was near the back porch and the outhouse was a two-holer behind the chicken house. Mama never had running water, an indoor bathroom or dishwasher.

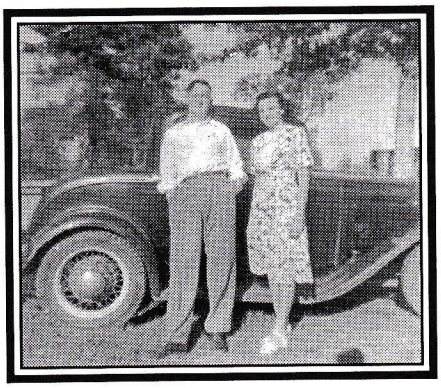


*Bill's first job at Holloway Drug Store.*

I remember riding the bus to Montrose school for a year or two, then riding the bus to Lake Village School, where I graduated in 1948. I remember getting my first job working for Holloway Drug Store in Lake Village, working after school and on weekends. I remember buying my first car in 1946 or 1947. It was a Ford with a rumble seat

in the back. I remember going to my first dentist to get my teeth fixed. They were in bad shape, but it sure felt good to eat with my teeth not hurting. Mom and dad had no money, so we kids could not get dental work. I finished high school in Lake Village and with my oldest sister's help, got a job in Fort Smith working with Sears Roebuck and Company. I lived with Bert rent free.

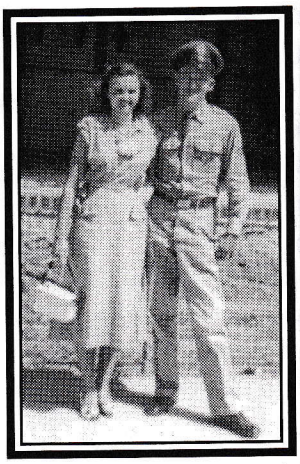
On June 4, 1950, I married my wife Vyrl Guest after dating several years and riding the bus every day. After a trip to Mississippi, we moved to Fort Smith and got an apartment at 414 North 18th. It was upstairs. My wife finished her school that year and I liked working for Sears, but the Korean War got bad and I got my Army Draft Notice. I wanted the Air Force and began looking for a place to join. Finally, after trying 10 or 12 recruiting offices, I found one place that needed a man, in Hamburg, Arkansas. With his help, I made the score required to enlist. He needed a man to make 21 out of 100 on the test. I retook the test after I got in the Air Force and made a 67, but I was so glad to be in the Air Force, I didn't care. After serving 28 years, I retired from the Air Force in Fort Smith, Arkansas. We raised four beautiful children, Steve, Don, Deedra and Brad and seven grandchildren, Josh, LeeAnne, Nick, Emily, Anna, Natalie and Tyler.



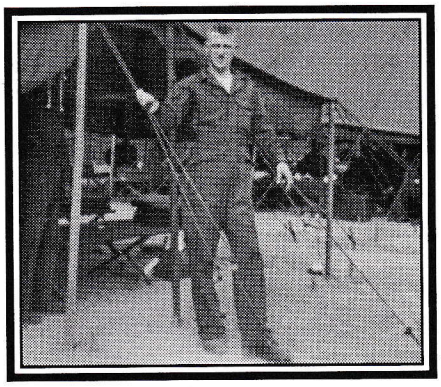
*Bill's first car*

*Bill – early 50's*

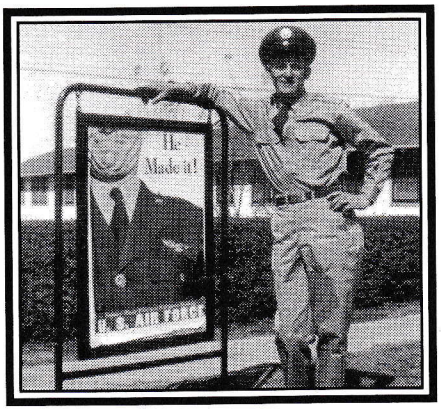
*Bill and Vyrl "wedding day"*



*Bill and Vyrl newlywed*

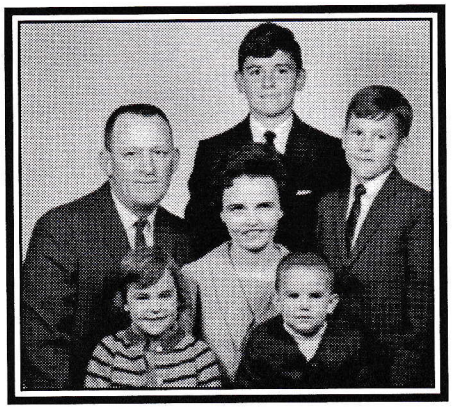


*Bill in basic training*

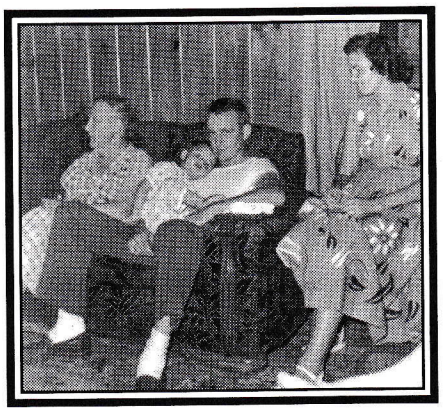



*Bill – U.S. Air Force*

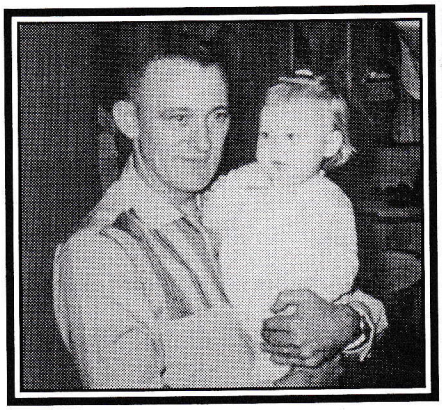
*Bill and Vyrl – Armistead Rd. – 1975*



*Bill, Vyrl, Steve, Don, Deedra & Brad*

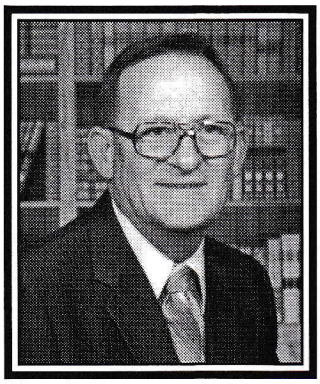


*Mama, Steve, Bill and Vyrl*

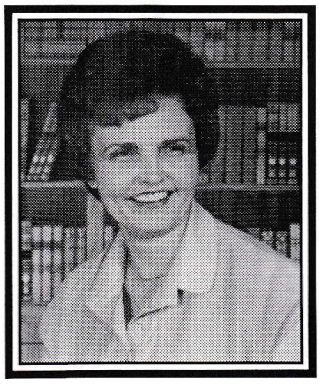


*Bill and niece*

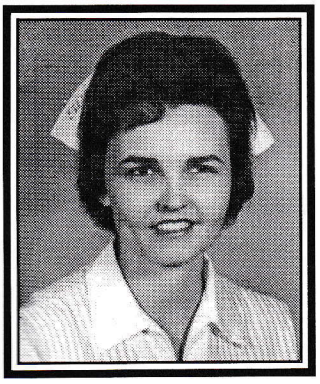
*Billy Don Nelms*



*Bill Nelms*



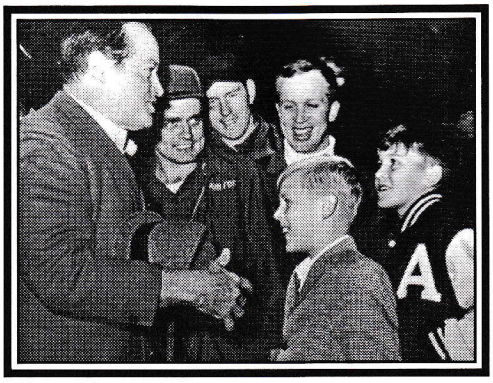
*Vyrl Nelms*



*Vyrl Nelms*

*Bill and Vyrl*

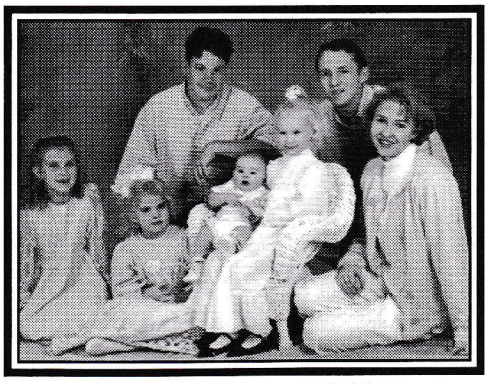
*Bill & Vyrl's four children*
*Don, Steve, Brad and Deedra*



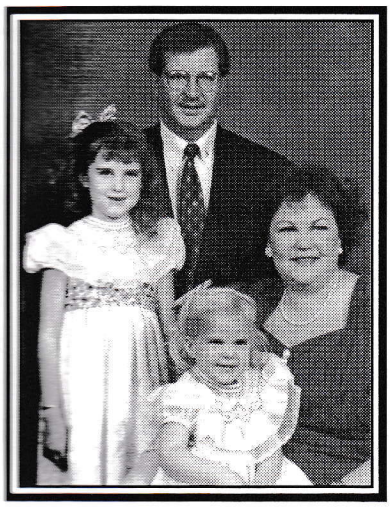
*Don and Bob Hope*

*Brad, Lisa, Tyler and Natalie*

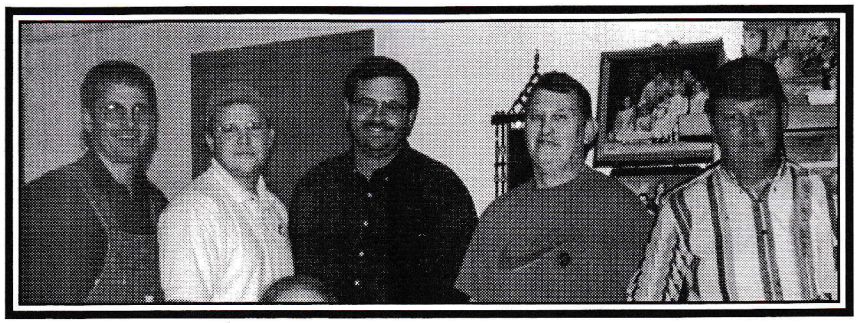
*Anna, Deedra and Emily*



*Bill and Vyrl's grandchildren.*
*Top row: Nick and Josh.*
*Bottom row: Emily, Anna, Tyler,*
*Natalie and LeeAnne.*



*Mike, Deedra, Emily and Anna*



*Nelms Grandsons – Don, Brad, Steve, Ben and Gary*

*The United States of America*

*honors the memory of*

*Billy Nelms*

*This certificate is awarded by a grateful nation in recognition of devoted and selfless consecration to the service of our country in the Armed Forces of the United States.*

William J. Clinton

*President of the United States*

WEDNESDAY, JULY 7, 1999 THURSDAY, JULY 8, 1999

THANK YOU NOTES....

*"God came calling last week and He called precious ones to be with Him.*

*God came calling last week and you answered in a very generous, gracious way. Through ministers' messages, musical notes, melodic voices, a touch of the hand and a tear from the eye. Through food, flowers, cards, phone calls, and memorials. You've comforted our hearts.*

*God came calling last week and you responded - a host of people to pay tribute to the young and beautiful, and the old and sick.*

*Our Sovereign God came calling last week. Bill and LeeAnne went to their heavenly home.*

*Husband, dad, grandfather, brother, uncle, we love him so much. Granddaughter, niece, cousin, we love her so much.*

*Thanks to all of you for every act of Christian love, ministry and kindness shown our family.*

*To God be the Glory!*

*Vyrl and family"*

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# Billy Nelms

Billy Nelms, 69, of Fort Smith died Monday, July 5, 1999, in a Fort Smith hospital. He was in real estate with River City Century 21 and a member of Haven Heights Baptist Church. He was a 28-year Air Force veteran and also Korean War veteran.

Funeral will be 10 a.m. Thursday at Haven Heights Baptist Church with burial with military honors at the U.S. National Cemetery in Fort Smith under the direction of Edwards Funeral Home of Fort Smith.

He is survived by his wife, Vyrl; one daughter, Deedra Diann Mann of Rockwell, Texas; three sons, Steven of Lavaca, Billy Don and Bradley Alan, both of Fort Smith; four sisters, Bertie Smith and Christine Ingle, both of Fort Smith, Larie Bawcom of Bastrop, La. and Doris Selby of Montrose; one brother, Clarence of Stuttgart; and seven grandchildren.

Pallbearers will be Steve, Don, Brad, Joshua and Nick Nelms, and Michael Mann.

Honorary pallbearers will be 407th Air Force Recruiting Attachment retirees and members of the Disciple Sunday School class.

The family will visit with friends from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. today at the funeral home.

Memorial contributions may be made to Phillips Cancer Support House, 2510 Dodson Ave., Fort Smith, AR 72901.

# LeeAnne Nelms

LeeAnne Nelms, 20, of Fort Smith died Tuesday, July 6, 1999, in Henrietta, Texas. She was a junior at the University of Central Arkansas. She was a graduate of Fort Smith Christian School. She was a member of the Alpha Sigma Tau Sorority, Who's Who and Haven Heights Baptist Church. She was a four time state track champion and a cheerleader.

Funeral will be 2 p.m. Friday in the First Baptist Church of Fort Smith with burial at Oak Cemetery of Fort Smith under the direction of Edwards Funeral Home of Fort Smith.

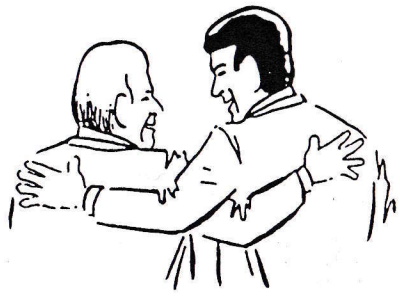
She is survived by her parents, Don and Donna Nelms of Fort Smith; one sister, Charlene Hamlin of Fort Smith; one brother, Joshua Nelms of Shephard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas; her maternal grandparents, Jim and Iona Young of Fort Smith; her paternal grandmother, Vyrl Nelms of Fort Smith; and her maternal great-grandmother, Donna Lee Marcum of Nimrod.

Pallbearers will be Bobby Douglas, Josh West, Matt Mooney, Jeremy Gardner, Scott Hickman and Jeff Farver.

Honorary pallbearers will be her cousins.

The family will visit with friends from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. today at the funeral home.

Memorial contributions may be made to Alpha Sigma Tau Sorority, U.C.A. No. 2029, Conway, AR 72035.



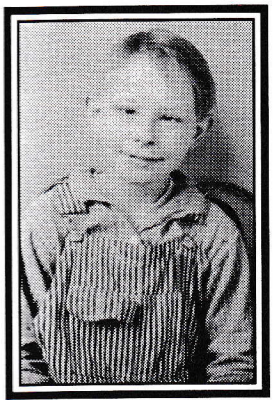
**Give Me a Friend**

Give me a friend
And I'll shuffle along:
My vision may vanish,
My dream may go wrong;
My wealth I may lose,
Or my money may spend;
But I'll walk right along,
If you give me a friend.

Give me a friend,
And my youth may depart
But still I'll be young
In the house of my heart;
Yes, I'll go on laughing
Right on to the end,
Whatever the years,
If you give me a friend.

—Author unknown

# Clarence Nelms



I am one of Ben F. and Cora Nelms' sons. I guess I am the third from the bottom and fourth from the top. There were seven of us children.

Growing up in the 1930's, as far as I can remember, Dad cut his foot across the top with a big axe. I remember he stayed in the hospital a long time. Back then he hewed cross ties for a living, using a big broad axe — flat on both sides and very heavy.

Back then everyone was poor, but I don't remember ever going hungry. In 1930, I was 3 1/2 years old. Sometime in the 1930's we moved to a farm near a place near Montrose. I remember picking cotton. The government would pay for destroying fields of cotton. I can remember this house very well. It was a big house, high off the ground on the west side of a lake about 1 1/2 miles from Uncle Henry White. The house was high off the ground and we would play under it. One day Gerald and I were playing under the house. It had big holes. We would stick our hands down the holes and one day I got bit. It scared Mama to death. She was wringing her hands. She just knew a snake had bit me. Leo White and Raymond poured water down the holes and big rats came running out. This is also where we were living when the storm blew all the feathers off the chickens.

Kids today should have seen our toys back then. We played with tobacco cans, broom handles and iron wheels. Wagon wheel rims were our best toy.

Corn cobs had many uses back then. My cousin Gerald White and I would play all day using them for cows and horses, and pasture them. They were different colors — red, white and yellow. He showed me how to be a doctor. We killed several of Mama's hens.

We were poor back then, but we did not know it. We had a good time anyway.

From this place we moved to the Cone place, eight miles south of Snyder. Snyder is between Hamburg and Montrose. Then I was big enough to work. I can remember chopping cotton and picking cotton with all my sisters and brothers.

I remember killing my first squirrel and playing baseball with the McDuffies and others. We also had a game where we would have water in bottles and play like drunk men. One day Christine picked up a bottle that had coal oil in it thinking it was water. She liked to have strangled to death. I thought she was going to die.

I remember going to school at Snyder and riding the school bus. All the roads then were dirt and mud. I would have to help push the bus up every hill.

Daddy was a sharecropper. I can remember when Raymond shot his arm off squirrel hunting.

I remember when Parker was dating Larie. He would come to see her with a bulldog on his horse. I think Dad got a female puppy from him and named her Beaulah. She was my dog. Dad had three more dogs. They hunted wild hogs like our other dogs hunted deer. One of the hounds got rabies and bit Beaulah. Daddy had to kill her. I remember how I cried when he had to kill her.

I think we were living on the Cone place when World War II started. I can remember Delton Carpenter staying with us, helping Daddy farm and how many peas he could eat!

I guess it was about this time that Bertie got tired of picking and chopping cotton and moved to Camden, Arkansas. She went to work at the bag mill.

The next move we made, I am not too sure about, but I think it was either Thebes or Snyder, near Post Oak Station. We lived here when Pearl Harbor was bombed in 1941.

From there we moved to Chicot County. I was 13 then and can remember moving to the Bankston place for a year or so.

*Clarence, Edna, Sharon, Gary, Ronnie and Wanda*

Then I remember Daddy buying our first home on Highway 82, three miles east of Montrose. R.D. and Doris helped him get a government loan. It was the first home we ever had.

I remember working six days a week. Daddy would give me a dollar. I would go to Lake Village on the bus, go swimming in Lake Chicot, see a show, eat popcorn and still have money left. This is hard to believe, but it is true.

The minks Daddy caught around Christmas that Bill told about is true, because I was with him. We would walk all around Lake Grampus with hip boots. It would take us all day. I can remember him showing me a mink track. He said we will catch it next time and sure enough we did. Back then mink hides sold for $38 or $40 at Sears Roebuck. Now they sell for $8 or $10.

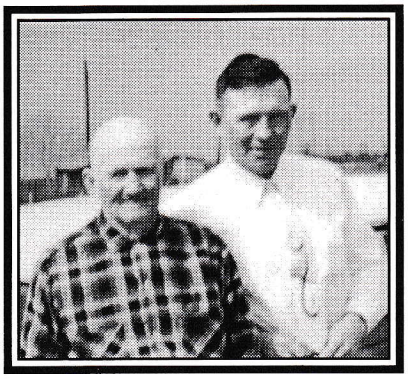
From the time we moved to Chicot County to now would take days and days to tell, but this is just a few things I remember from my childhood.

I married Edna Dean Abernathy in 1947. We had four children — Sharon, Gary, Ronnie and Wanda Sue. We lost Ronnie in a tractor accident in 1976. We have seven wonderful grandchildren, Shelly, Brad, Jennifer, Alisha, Rhonda, Chris and Jared, and one great-granddaughter, Hanna.

I moved from Montrose to Stuttgart and worked for Riceland Foods for 32 years and eight months before retiring.

Edna Dean and I celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary in 1998. My brother Bill and four sisters were there.

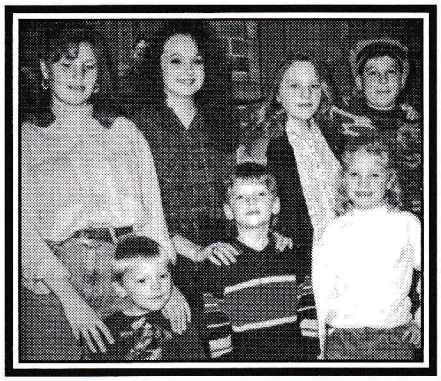
Yes, Mom and Dad were the best. They raised seven children and did a good job. I know we all wish we knew then what we know now.



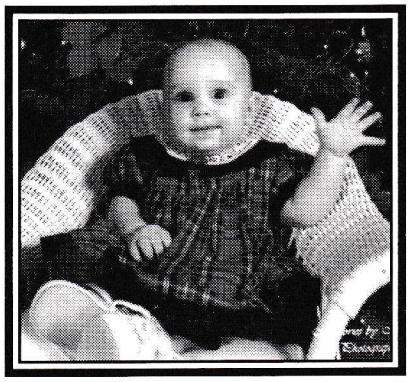
*Daddy and Clarence*

*Clarence*

*Clarence, Edna and family*



*Clarence and Edna's grandchildren*



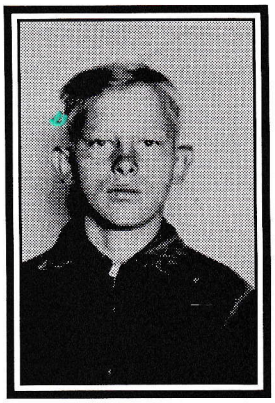
*Great-granddaughter, Hannah Booth*

*Clarence and Edna's 50th Wedding Anniversary*

*50th Wedding Anniversary*

# Raymond Nelms

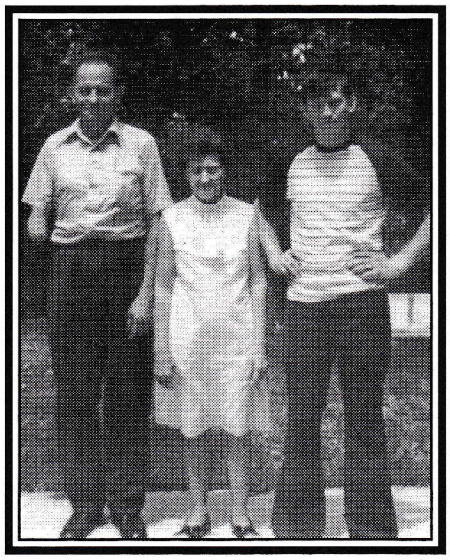
Raymond was born in Hamburg, Arkansas. He married Pauline Key and had one son named Benjamin Raymond who likes to be called Ben. They lived next door to Mama and Daddy on Highway 82 until Mama passed away. They moved to Fort Smith when Ben finished high school in Lake Village. Raymond went to work the first week he was up here and worked every day until he retired. He had lost his right arm squirrel hunting at age 13, but that did not interfere with his working. He passed away in 1986 at age 68 from lung cancer. Pauline passed away two years later with breast cancer. They had bought a home on Jacobs Street. Ben has it and has worked at Whirlpool for 25 years.



*Raymond*

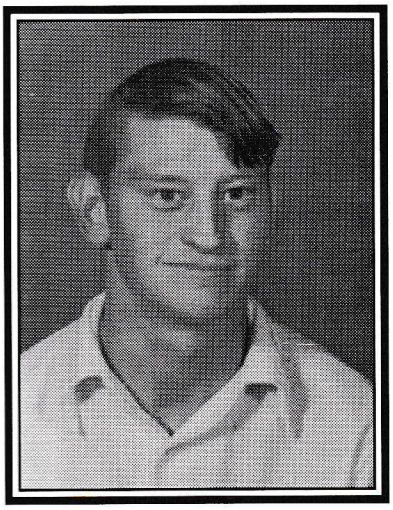
*Pauline Nelms, Raymond's wife*

*Ben Nelms*



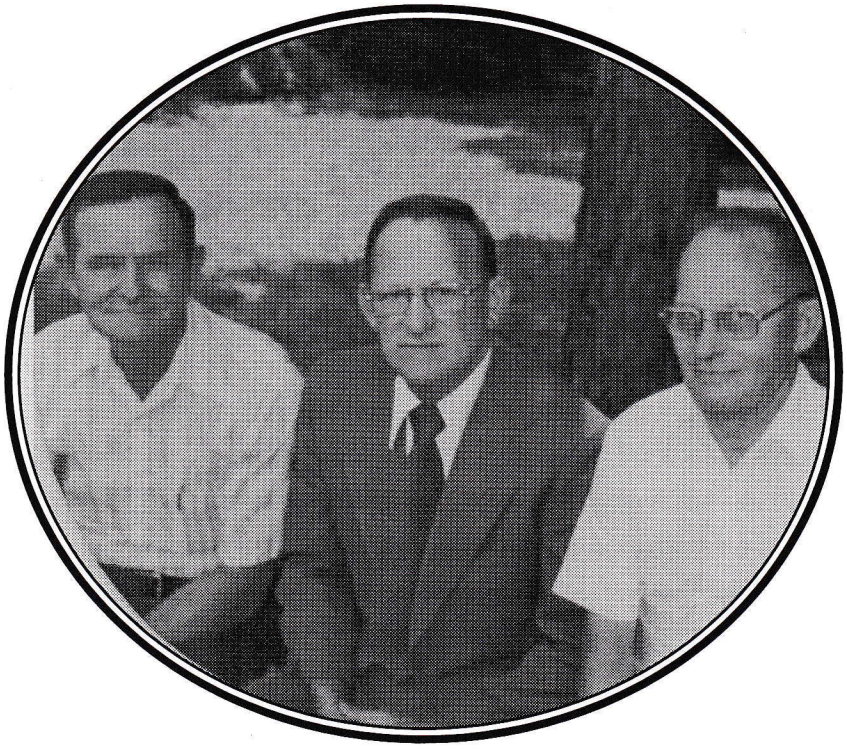
*Raymond, Pauline and Ben*

*Ben*



*Ben*

*Larie, Ben and Christine*



*Clarence, Bill and Raymond*

# Christine Nelms Ingle

I am the baby of eight children born to Cora Francis Higginbotham Nelms and Benjamin Franklin Nelms. I was born April 11, 1932 — a depression baby. I was born on the Butler place at Hamburg, Arkansas.

I have been told of happenings while we lived at the Cone place.

I remember moving to the Bankston place on 82 Highway, then later to the F.H.A. home down the highway toward Montrose. Mama was so proud of that home.

I can remember the stamps we had to use in order to get sugar. The sugar was rationed out because of the war.

I can place being at home with my three brothers. Three older sisters were already married and away from home. Mama's second baby died at birth, leaving us seven.

Daddy farmed — sharecropper — with mules and primitive plows. We always had plenty to eat. Daddy killed hogs every fall. We always had milk cows. If we didn't have a cow to milk at that time, our neighbors did. They shared with us and we would share with them. Mama always had a garden — potatoes, corn, green beans, cucumbers, peas, lettuce, onions, squash, butter beans, peach trees, plum trees, blackberries, sorghum and ribbon cane for syrup. We always had chickens, roosters crowing every morning, plenty of eggs, fried chicken and always a pantry full of canned vegetables, fruit — even canned pork sausage.

When I was 9-10 years old — during the war — Jerome, Arkansas had a Jap camp, all under tall wire with guards everywhere. Daddy helped build this camp. They were paid good wages. That was really a help, supplementing my dad's income. Today all that remains of that camp is a monument and the big smoke stack. All the many buildings are gone. After the war, the Japanese were sent back home to Japan. Some farmers around the area were allowed to buy the houses that once housed the Japanese for homes or storage sheds. The Japanese were not mistreated. They were given food and shelter until the war was over.

*Debbie, Christine and Sherree*

Mama loved her family and loved her neighbors. She could call on any one of them in time of need. They knew they could depend on her help also. Some of our neighbors I remember were Muriel and Herman Smith (Mama witnessed to Herman many a time), the Suits family, the Brockwell's, Lee Swayze family, the Martin Guest family, and Pearlie and Barnie Sykes. I have good memories of all these neighbors. We helped them and they helped us.

Mama and Daddy always called me the baby. I guess maybe I was spoiled, but that didn't hurt nothing, huh?

My Mother bought chicken feed and flour in 25-lb. bags. She made quilts, dresses, aprons, curtains, table cloths and dish towels. I still have some aprons my Mother had made. When Mama got up in the morning, putting an apron on was as much a part of her getting dressed as was putting on her shoes. Her aprons weren't always just alike. When she or one of the neighbor women got a new apron or bonnet pattern, they passed it around. Sometimes one of them would order a pattern from the *Progressive Farmers* magazine. No matter what the pattern though, whether it was supposed to have one or not, Mama always put a pocket on her apron so she could carry her snuff and a handkerchief.

Mama's aprons were used for so many other things besides keeping her dress clean. Sometimes she'd gather the eggs and carry them to the house in her apron. If she was in the garden and decided to pick a few tomatoes, cucumbers or green beans and she didn't want to go to the house for a bucket, she would put them in her apron and hold up the corners of it. I remember often when a thunderstorm would come up suddenly, she would run out and gather up baby chicks in her apron and help the old hen get her babies to the chicken house and out of the rain. When Mama canned vegetables or fruit

the summer, the kitchen would be so hot from the heat of the big wood stove. She would stop what she was doing and wipe the sweat from her face on her apron. Bet we couldn't count the tears she dried on her apron tail when my brothers and I would fall down and skin our knee or elbows and come to her to make it all better.

Mama made a lot of her aprons from feed sacks and scraps of material. She always ironed them real pretty. Everything was ironed with a cast iron, heated on the top of the stove. I remember lots of nights Mama would wrap an iron in an old sheet and put it in my bed to keep my feet warm. "I still have cold feet."

When Mama canned, it was my job to watch the hot temperature gauge on her pressure cooker. She had one blow up on her once. Mama had a special apron to wear on wash days. It had a deeper pocket to put clothes pins in. She had fancier ones to wear on Sunday. Everyone that helped in the kitchen had to have an apron. She had some white ones with embroidery on them. I can remember hearing her say, "Let me get you an apron," and she would get one from the dresser drawer, all starched and ironed.

After I married and came back home with Debbie. I can see Mama holding her, rocking and wrapping her feet up in her apron tail. I don't think she ever thought I dressed her warmly enough. She would say, "Her little legs are cold," and she would wrap her little legs in her apron tail. I catch myself doing the same things to my grandbabies. I don't wear aprons, but I'm always buttoning their coats or trying to get them to put a cap on when they don't want to.

Debbie was eight when Mama passed away. She would say, "Mama, you act just like Mee Maw." I didn't mind being compared to her. To me that was the highest compliment anyone can pay me.

Mama's apron has held a lot of stove wood, eggs, peaches and potatoes.

Mama was always concerned about our feelings. She often told us that she didn't love any one of us kids or grandkids any more than the other one. We all knew we were loved. It wasn't said often, but it was seen every day, as she went about her home work.

Mama would always see to it that Debbie had marbles and stuff to make mud pies. She would line them up on the back steps for the sun to bake them. We all had to walk around her mud pies. She would play for hours making mud pies. Sometimes she would save me some pretty feedsacks and I would make her dresses or aprons.

*Christine and Norma Jean*

I still have several I made her from feed sacks.

*Quilting Parties*

Back in those days — no telephone, no electricity, no running water, none of the modern conveniences we have today. Mama and her aunts, sisters, neighbors and friends had quilting parties. They would put the frame up in a room and it would stay there for several days or weeks, until the ladies finished the quilt. I remember it was in my bedroom. I slept with the frame and quilt rolled up — hanging from the ceiling. All of the ladies did a good job, fine stitches. Sometimes the pattern of the quilt was fan shaped, block shaped, or strip shaped. Next time they would meet at someone else's house and have a quilting party. Our family still has some of the quilts our Mama made.

I am sorry Sherree Lynn didn't know my Mama. Sherree was born August 11, 1968. Mama and Daddy were both gone then.

When Bill and I were in high school, many afternoons we came in from school starved. We would go to Mama's pantry, open up a jar of peaches, tomatoes, or pickles. If she ever missed them, she never said anything to us. There was always corn bread, biscuits, meat, molasses, pickles, baked sweet potatoes, plenty of buttermilk and sweet milk clabber on the table, covered up with a table cloth. Nothing was ever thrown out. Mama used the biscuit bread to make bread puddings.

We found Mama in her garden working or helping my Daddy in the field lots of times when we came in from school. Mama and Daddy knew how to have a good garden. Everything had to be watered with a bucket. They carried buckets of water a quarter of a mile or more. Daddy used syrup buckets, punched several holes in them and buried them beside the cucumber vines. It released the water slowly. Kentucky pole beans, onions, potatoes and squash were always planted at just the right time. Everyone got to help dig sweet potatoes. Daddy and my brothers

would find honey bees. Later they would get the honey and Mama canned that too.

Our home life was good. I remember waking up many mornings hearing Mama or Daddy singing or whistling. They both were good singers. Mama was the one that saw to it that we all went to church. I remember sitting in the back of the wagon going to Central Church (that we all built) on 82 Highway — mud — no gravel — then we got it graveled. Years later 82 Highway was paved.

Our neighbor Henry Tankersley, Bill, Clarence and I would sometimes walk the two or three miles to church. We would sing all the way there and back — in step — singing to the top of our voices. One night we were all singing and there was a big tree by the side of the road. We stepped over a big limb — we thought. We got a little ways down the road and heard some shots. Someone had killed the biggest rattlesnake I had ever seen. We had all stepped over it. We thought it was a log.

Daddy finally got a truck. He even drove it to Mississippi to see me.

Daddy fixed all of our cane bottom chairs.

Daddy knew how to entertain all of the grandchildren. Many times he would get them together in the corner of the room and tell them stories like "Knotty Jack." Sometimes he made up or told them ghost stories or stories of trapping mink, or coon and deer stories.

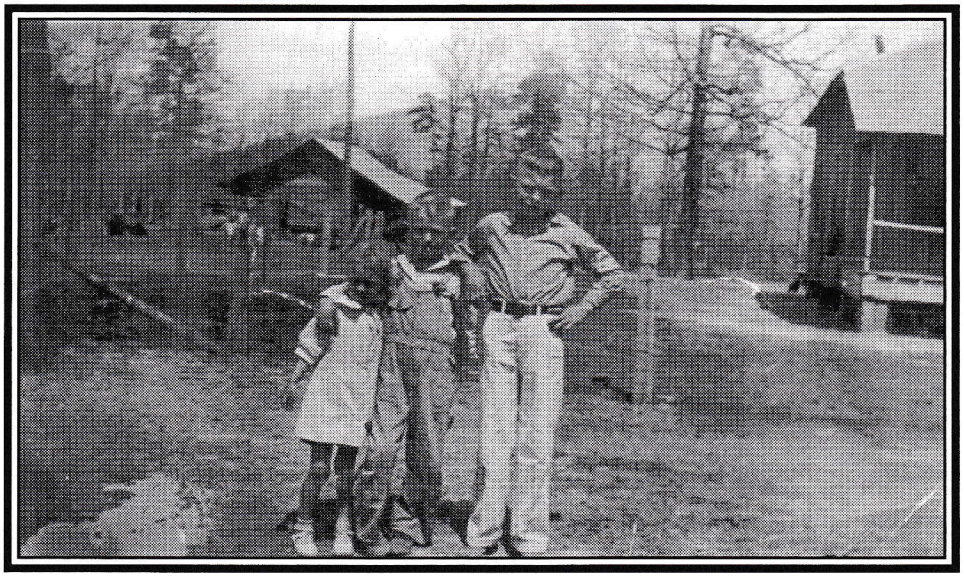
Back then no one had high chairs for the babies to sit in. We held them or if they were big enough they could sit by Daddy on a long bench. If they were too short to reach the table, a syrup bucket worked just fine as a booster chair. Jerry has a scar from a fall off one of those buckets.

Daddy always fixed the chicken and fish and made sure all bones were out of it before he gave it to them. Eventually he would get to eat, depending on how many grandchildren were lined up on the old wooden bench. They all learned to like buttermilk and bread, biscuits and syrup and sweet potatoes.

Daddy was almost bald-headed. I remember once he walked under the stove pipe in the front room and burned the several hairs he had left off. He learned to duck down.

Mama always made plenty of biscuits and she always called you out of bed to come butter the biscuits while they were hot. Nothing was better than Mama's homemade biscuits. They were always the same, always just right. Always plenty of them too. To my knowledge, Mama didn't use recipes written down — pinch of this, dab of that, little flour and buttermilk — always the same.

I have two children. Debbie was born September 14, 1951 and Sherree Lynn was born August 11, 1968. Debbie has two children — Sean and Ariss DeLee. Sherree has three children — Christopher, Kennedy and MacKenzie. Sean has a daughter — Courtney. All together I have two children, five grandchildren and one great-grandchild.



*Christine, Billy and Clarence*

*Christine*

*Christine*

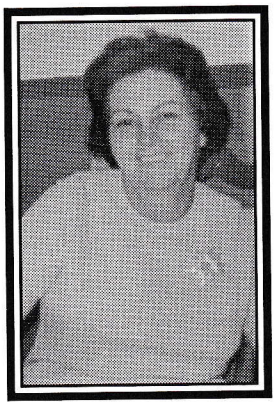
*Christine and our home on Hwy. 82*

*Christopher, MacKenzie and Kennedy*

*Sean and Courtney*

*Sean, Debbie and Ariss*

# Doris Nelms Selby



I remember a happy childhood. I know my Daddy was a sharecropper and didn't ever have much money, but if he had any he would give us the last dime out of his pocket.

He was a good provider and always raised all the food we needed — sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, turnips, greens, hogs. He always hunted and brought in squirrels. I don't remember Mama cooking any rabbits though. From the time I can remember, I can still hear her calling "Soook-Brownie," so she could milk. She always did the milking. She wouldn't let us help. Once she won the cow calling contest of our County Fair calling her cow.

My best memories were the nine years we lived on the Cone place around the Trafalgar community.

Mama and Daddy were both good singers. Mama went to singing schools growing up. Daddy couldn't read, but he could learn those church hymns and old ballads. They would sing the ballad, "It was sad when that great ship went down (Titanic)" and we'd cry when they were holding hands and singing "Nearer My God to Thee." They always sang a love ballad about "For the love of Barbara Allen" too. We all would sit out on the porch at night and sing. Our neighbors would come over and join us. Mama loved her neighbors. She would put a scarf over her head and check on them often.

I especially remember churning, singing and keeping time with her churn dash.

Our oldest sister and her friend left home from the Cone place and went to the "city" to get a job. They worked at the bag factory in Cullendale, Arkansas. I remember they came home and brought two bicycles. Lavern's little sister and I rode those the nine years we lived there. There was a buck run hill about a mile from where we lived and we'd get on top of that hill, put our feet over the handle bars and ride down that hill. We were going really fast by the time we got to the bottom. I don't know how many times we'd get eggs and ride those bicycles the nine miles to the "Company Store" and swap them for candy. Mama always had lots of eggs.

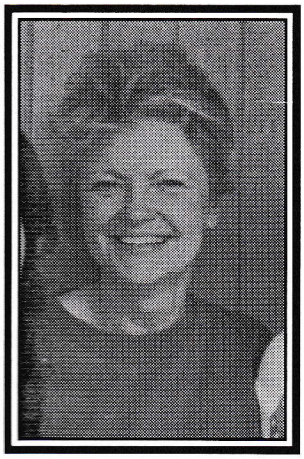
I don't ever remember my mother saying any kind of curse or slang word. She had two of seven kids that would always wet the bed at night, but she'd just hang bed sheets out to dry and they'd be ready for bed the next night.

Once she was scolding me for something and I climbed a tree so she couldn't switch me. Every time she'd tell me to come down, I'd climb a little higher. I finally got so high she said, "My Lord, Doris, come down and I won't whip you." We couldn't do our Daddy that way though.

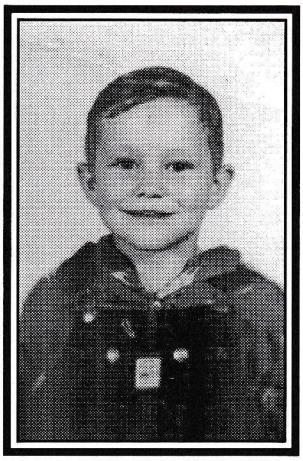
We had a mad dog come through our community once and bit Clarence's two dogs they hunted with. Daddy knew he was going to have to kill them. Clarence followed him around two or three days begging him not to kill his dogs. But Daddy knew he had to.

We were living at the Cone place when I made a decision to trust Jesus and become a Christian. We were having a revival at our only church in that community. It was spring time and we were all helping in the fields. I felt led to go to the morning services. I guess Daddy perceived I was interested in going, so he would unhook his plow and let me ride the old gray mule to church. I would ride bareback and tie him behind the graveyard so he couldn't be seen. I trusted Jesus during one of those morning services. Later on one of my boys surrendered to become a preacher. This same church called him to his first pastorate. I reflect back often

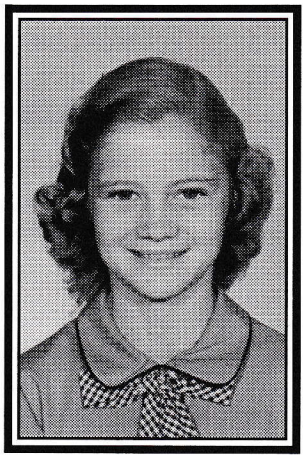
*Doris and R.D. Selby*



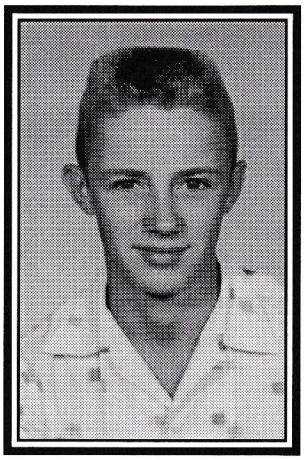
*Pat*



*Jerry*



*Nina*



*Bobby*

ut how the Lord works.

Although we were a large family, we e all healthy. I don't remember any of children having to go to the hospital ept Raymond, my oldest brother. He his arm off hunting on Sunday. Mama always to get them to hunt on day. I ribute our to Mama's plea to Lord, have on us." storms up. Daddy watch the and Mama would "Lord, have mercy on us."

I remember one Christmas on the place, we hadn't made a good crop didn't look like we were going to much Christmas. Mama and Daddy buy our Christmas and hide it. We usually find it though and eat lots of but it was Christmas Eve and we hadn't found our Christmas. Daddy trapped a lot in the winter, so he his traps Christmas Eve and caught two minks. I member Mama "thanking the Lord," raising her and clapping when he brought them in. Minks a good price then. People were wearing mink so he dressed the hides, got the wagon out, went the store and sold them for $80.00. So we had a Christmas.

Once Daddy let Raymond and me go to Uncle Mama's brother, to help him chop cotton. We two mules "Pete" and "Blue." Raymond knew ole wouldn't let ole Pete pass him, but I didn't. We racing down the road. Raymond let me outrun a while, then he decided to pass me. When ole started passing, Blue cut off the road into the I found myself holding on from under his neck, dragged off and Raymond spent the rest of the hunting ole Blue. I think Daddy knew what happened, but he didn't say much.

We moved from Trafalgar to Thebes and I started dating R.D., the one I married. Daddy wouldn't let us go anywhere in a car, but he could come over Saturday night and Wednesday night. We dated about a year before marrying.

During that time, Daddy was digging sweet potatoes. When they were freshly dug, you'd get brown stuff on your hands and it wouldn't come off. I wasn't going to pick up potatoes, but I soon decided I'd better help.

R.D.'s family had a car and he took us all over to Monticello Hospital to see Mama's brother, Uncle Lawrence, who had been shot and was dying. So we got to ride in a car together.

Once we had a flood there in July. I took poison ivy all over my face. Daddy took me to see Dr. Parker at Snyder and he put some kind of purple medicine all over my face. R.D. and two friends walked a mile in chest high water to see me and I hid my face under the sheet and wouldn't let them see me.

Daddy had to move after that flood. He went to a big house in Snyder for a while. R.D. and I got married while we lived there. It was a big "dog trot house," a hall down the middle and we spent our honeymoon there. We moved to Thebes in a big house and they moved in with us for a while.

Then on to the Delta between Montrose and Lake Village. Clarence, Bill and Christine can tell how things were from then on. We only got to visit after R.D. got a 1½ ton truck so we had a way to go. We visited often after we got the truck though. Even carried all them to Fort Smith to see our sister Bertie in it one time.

The community they moved in didn't have a church. Mama thought that was awful. They had a

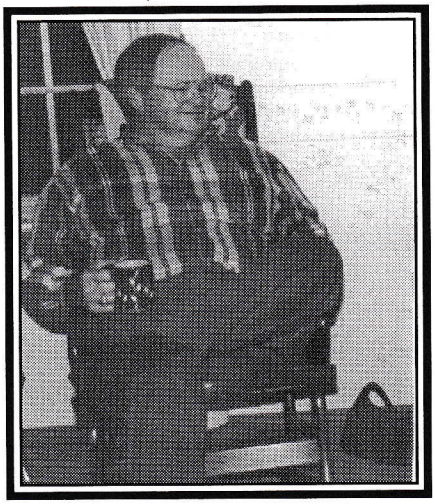
neighbor by them that worked on Sunday. She'd go over to visit every Monday and tell them they shouldn't do that and they needed a church to go to. There was a family down the road who had a piano. All the youth started walking down there and singing at night and behold everyone got interested in a church building. Mr. Smith, her neighbor that worked on Sunday, was a carpenter and he took the lead. It wasn't long before they had a thriving church to go to. We even picked up families in our 1½ ton truck on the way down. All three of my oldest children were saved there.

Mama took diabetes while they lived there and died and was buried on her 67th birthday. Bill had grown up, married, joined the Air Force and was in the Philippines. Miraculously, two weeks before she died, he got a chance to come home on a plane to see her. What a loving Heavenly Father.

The last thing I heard her say and do was reach out her finger to Daddy and get a pinch of snuff, then tell us she felt alright.

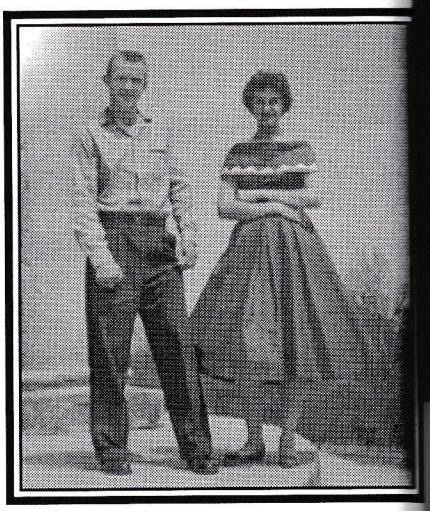
Daddy lived ten years longer. He was 78 and ha battled leukemia for several years. He didn't manifest his Christianity as strong as Mama and I wanted to know for sure he was saved. I carried our Pastor ove to talk to him once and during the conversation, instead of answering our Pastor, he looked straight at me and said, "Sis, I settled that a long time ago." He died very peacefully with my arm under his head.

We have four children, Bobby, Jerry, Nina and Patricia; twelve grandchildren, Lisa, Chris, Suzanne, Phil, Ted, Tracy, Eric, Richelle, Renee, Thomas, Jody and Dorissa; and twelve great-grandchildren, Jennifer, Sarah, Chad, Sidney, Lauren, Jessica, Drew, Erin, Selby Caroline, Selby Lane, Stetson and Marshall Smith.



*Jerry*

*Nina, Bobby, Patsy, Debbie and Patricia*



*Bobby and Patsy*

*Richelle, Nina, Renee and Thomas*

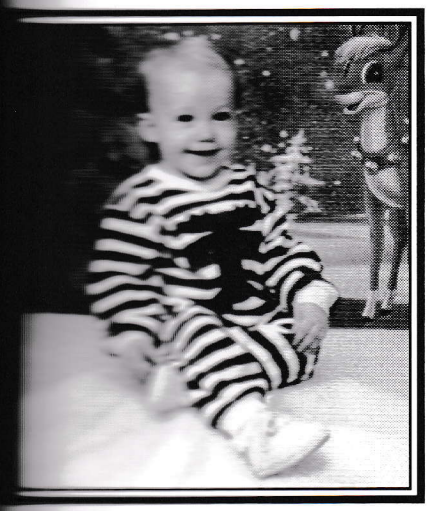
*Dorissa, Patricia and Jody*

*R.D. and Doris Selby*

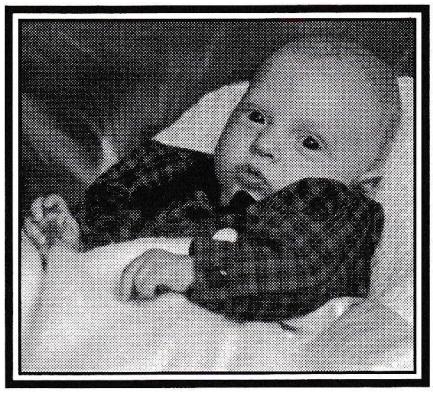
*Tracy's wedding*

*Jerry, Nina, Pat, R.D., Doris and Bobby*

*Dorissa, Pat, Jody, Melanie and Selby Moreau*



*Selby Caroline Tucker*



*Stetson*

*Selby Moreau*

# Larie Nelms Bawcom

I am the third daughter of Ben and Cora Nelms. One daughter before me died when she was young. Think her name was Aliene.

I married Parker Bawcom in 1938 when I was twenty. We have three daughters, Mary Avanell who was born in 1940, Betty Joyce who was born in 1944 and Linda Gail who was born in 1956.

Avanell married David Linzay. They live in Monroe, LA. They have two daughters. Pamela Renea married Rodney Traweek of Monroe. They have one son, Tyler Blake, who will be two years old in May. Melissa Diane married Ray Williams in 1995. They live in West Monroe.

Betty married Larry Wilson. They have two daughters. Christy Amie lives in Bastrop. Carrie Elizabeth married Chad Culp in 1995. They live in West Monroe. Betty and Larry's first child, Laura Lee, died in 1969.

Linda Gail married William Hayman of Bastrop. They have two boys, Corey Scott and Timothy Neal. They now live in Monroe, LA.

Avanell drove a school bus in Ouachita Parish for 14 years. Then she retired from that job and started driving a limousine for funerals and weddings.

Betty doesn't work. She does arts and crafts in her home. She makes flower arrangements and lamps.

Linda works at the Council for Aging in Bastrop, mostly with old people.

I can remember things Bill can't tell because he was young during the depression years. We made it pretty good. We lived on a Mr. Butler's place in Hamburg, AR. He was a Supreme Court Judge in Little Rock, AR. He and his wife would visit us in the spring and winter and bring big boxes of material. My oldest sister Bertie would make us clothes. She didn't have patterns. She would cut the material up and sew it up in dresses for us. They always fit pretty good.

Our dad had a pretty large family. His mother Mollie married a Moses. They had one son Edd Moses. Then he died and she married Thomas Nelms who had three boys by a wife that had died. They were Willie, Luke and Mark. Then he married Mollie. I think she was a Stanley. They had Ben, Joe and Maggie who have all passed away and some of their children. Joe and wife Ora didn't have any children. He was in World War One. Mark had two boys that are deceased and two of Maggie's children are deceased. All of Uncle Willie's children have passed away.

Willie was a barber in Hamburg. He would cut all of our family's hair when we were young.

Our Dad and Mother kept one of Willie's girls when we were growing up. Her name was Inez. She married Elvin Lemons from Monticello. She died with tuberculosis.

Our dad cut his foot real bad when he was about 35 years old. He stayed in a hospital in Monticello about a month. He never could wear a shoe on that foot without having to cut the shoe.

We had young men come and live in our home and help farm. One was a first cousin of ours, Jess Nelms. He was one of Willie Nelms' boys and Inez's brother. Two more boys lived with us and farmed. One was Elvin Hill and one was Delton Carpenter. They seemed like brothers to us because they lived with us so long. Delton died in the Armed Services overseas during World War II.

Our grandmother Mollie lived with us for years when I was real young. I can barely remember her. Our dad used to try to spank us. She would grab us and run. She wouldn't let him spank us.

*Larie and Parker – 50th Wedding Anniversary*

When we were young, some daughters of Mama and Papa's friends, the Tulls from Hamburg, used to come stay with us during cotton picking time. They would all sit on the porch at night and sing. We didn't have a radio or TV then. Some had record players, but we didn't have one till I was a teenager.

Later on after we left Hamburg, our Dad was a sharecropper. He made the crop and gave the people who owned the land a part of what we made. The people who owned the land owned a big store too. They would issue us stamps which we would trade for groceries at the store. We would go buy groceries about once a month. Our Mother and Daddy would be gone all day buying groceries. We girls would keep the younger ones.

We always had a big garden and we canned in jars. Then we would open it up in winter time.

We would raise lots of potatoes. And we had a potato house made out of logs. We would keep our potatoes and canned stuff in this all winter. If it came a real cold, we would all go in this log potato house. Our Dad could almost look at the clouds and tell if the wind was going to blow. We got up lots of nights and went to the potato house. We also kept our meat in this potato house and smoked it with hickory wood.

Our Mother was a good cook and we had lots of company. Our Mother had a large family — five sisters and five brothers — and they all had large families. They came to see us a lot. We had about 50 or 60 cousins on our Mother's side. Not quite that many in our Dad's family.

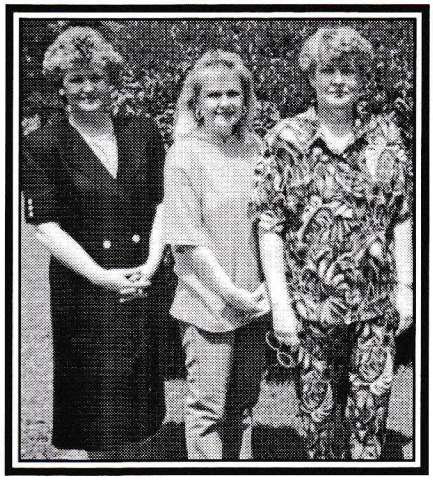
I remember hearing our Dad tell about his Mother telling him that when she was young, they would go somewhere in the wagon, they would have to kill two or three hogs and carry along to throw to the wolves to keep them out of the wagons.

My three children are Avanell, Betty and Linda. My grandchildren are Pam, Melissa, Betsy, Christy, Neal and Cory. My great-grandchildren are Blake, Luke, Carle and Sara.

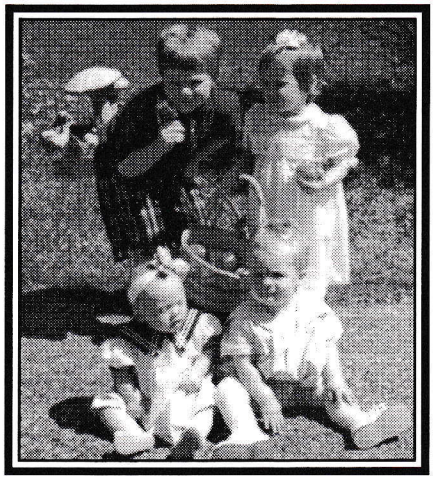
*Chris, Larie and Bud King*

*Larie, brothers and sisters*

*Larie and Bertie*

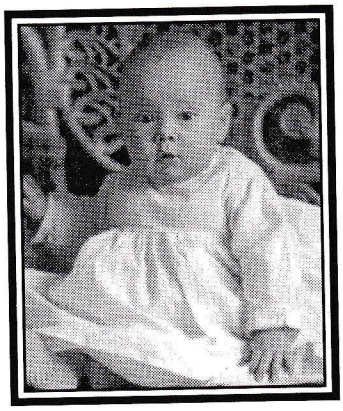


*Larie and Parker's children – Betty, Linda and Avanell*



*Our younger great-grandchildren – Blake, Sara, Carle and Luke*

# Bertie Nelms Smith

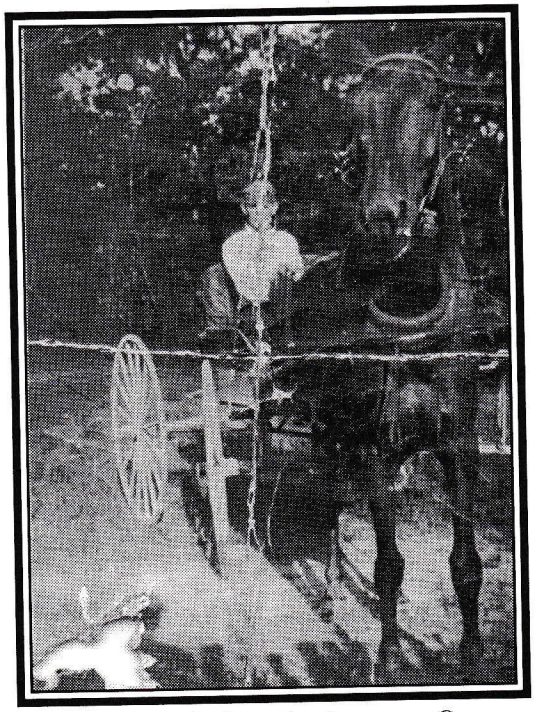


March 17, 1999 in Fort Smith, Arkansas. I am the oldest of eight children. Since 1995, when Brother Billy and his wife went to Glorieta, New Mexico to a Baptist retreat, Billy has been wanting us to write about us growing up during the Depression years. He said it would be hard for his four children, Steve, Don, Deedra, and Brad and seven grandchildren, Josh, LeeAnne, Nick, Emily, Anna, Natalie, and Tyler to believe how tough it was during the Depression. He was born during the Depression, so he doesn't remember too much about it, but has heard us talk about it.

I feel so blessed for being the first child born to Ben F. and Cora F. Nelms (Benjamin Franklin and Cora Francis) on April 1, 1915 in Hamburg, Arkansas. So I am 83 years old. This was before electricity, gas, radios, and telephones were around. The only entertainment was going to church, singing, picnics, hunting and telling ghost stories. People farmed with horses and mules. They cut timber and ties for railroads that were being built, and lumber for houses.

Our mother was a beautiful young woman with a beautiful voice. We have pictures of her in long full skirts to the ground, tight at the waist, full sleeves below the elbow, gathered at the waist, and the neckline was high. She wore a tight corset with two or three full petticoats. She loved bracelets. She was one of twelve children born to J. C. and Georgia (Kelley) Higginbotham. She was next to the oldest child. Aunt Allie was the oldest. She grew up a few miles from Hamburg in a little community called "Promise Land." She sang in the choir in quartets all around Hamburg. Our dad met her at one of these singings. They courted in a horse and buggy, or on horseback. I asked my mother if they kissed back then. She said after they were engaged, the men wore big red handkerchiefs around their necks. She said daddy put it around her neck and pulled her up to him and kissed her. They were a nice looking couple. Grandma and Grandpa Higginbotham were from large families, twelve in each. She was a Kelley so 3/4 of the people around Hamburg are some relation to us.

Our dad quit school at age twelve. He finished third grade and didn't get to go to school half a term because he had to work on the farm. His dad, Thomas, was several years older than his mother, Mollie. He had three sons — Mart, Willie, and Luke Nelms. Grandma had one son, Edd Moses, when they got married. They then had four children — Joe; Benjamin; daughter Maggie, two years younger than daddy; and one daughter that was crib death. Grandpa Nelms got sick and unable to work when our dad was twelve years old. He quit school and made a living for his mother, dad and sister Maggie. Uncle Joe might have helped some, but he and Aunt Ora married real young. She was from Promise Land also. She gave me the first piece of furniture she and Uncle Joe bought. It's a little four-legged solid oak table with two shelves. She also gave me a little pitcher and bowl that I treasure and a quilt and watch Uncle Joe gave her.



*Ben Nelms (in buggy) going to see Cora.*

While Uncle Joe was in World War I, Dad made a living for his family hauling timber long distances with a wagon pulled by horses. He could not make the trip in one day. He always had hunting dogs, would take his gun, and he would sleep on the wagon and hear wolves, wildcats, panthers, and all kinds of wild animals come up close to the wagon, but the dogs would run them off. Lots of times, he killed a hog to take along to throw to them.

Mama and daddy got married in 1914. I was the first girl to be born to the Nelms family since Aunt Maggie. They all loved me and spoiled me. Mama said all the

would have to bring me candy, gum or something every time they came to see us. That was because they all loved Grandma Nelms. Grandpa Nelms died when I was a baby, so I don't remember him, but Grandma and Aunt Maggie lived with us until Aunt Maggie got married. I worshipped both of them. They spoiled me and Larie to death. If Mama or daddy would want to spank us, they would grab us up and run, so I guess they didn't want to spank us very bad.

Daddy worked for 50 cents and a dollar a day, but it would buy lots of groceries then. I have heard that two families could never live together, but we did and were all happy. I never saw Grandma Nelms or our mother cross in my life.

We had a treadle Singer sewing machine. Aunt Maggie would let me stand behind it and raise the pressure foot up and down. She did all the sewing, and all the baking of pies and cakes.

When I started walking, I would just follow her around. One day, she and Mama were shelling string beans and had boiled them in a big pot on the old wood stove. Aunt Maggie had some in a boiler turned around to put them in a jar and I ran into those hot beans.

We lived out in the country from Hamburg. Daddy was working. Our closest neighbor was 2½ miles. Aunt Maggie ran that far to get the doctor. When he got to our house, he had to doctor her before he did me. It burned my face, eyes, ears, and neck but it healed and left me with no scars. Every time I would see her, even a month before she died with cancer at the age of 65, she would pat my face and say, "God loves you. If you had died, I would have too." I think my guardian angels were watching over me like they have all my life.

Mama and Daddy had eight children. Mama had all of them at home. Aliene was born next; she was a crib death baby. She is buried in Hamburg Cemetery with daddy's family. Larie was born in Hamburg. Daddy named Larie, Benjamin, Raymond and me. Raymond was born next. We were so proud of him. We still lived out in the country from Hamburg. We always had good neighbors and lots of friends. Lala and Freeman Carpenter were one of our neighbors. She had twins the day after Raymond was born and had to go to the hospital. Mama nursed Raymond and her twins while she was in the hospital. In those days, they didn't have ways of keeping dates of births and they failed to register Raymond's birth. When he moved to Fort Smith and got ready to retire, he had no birth certificate. I wrote Lala Carpenter and she went to Hamburg and was able to get Raymond's birth certificate.

Aunt Maggie married Earl King from Vaiden, Mississippi, and of course, moved to Mississippi. I remember being mad at him. I would not have a thing to do with him because he was taking my Aunt Maggie to Mississippi. He always teased me and said I never did forgive him for taking Aunt Maggie to Mississippi. After a few years, they moved back to Arkansas because Grandma Nelms was in bad health and she wanted to help take care of her.

*Mama, Daddy and Aunt Maggie*

There was a saw mill between Hamburg and Montrose and a little town named Phelan. Uncle Earl worked there. Nothing is there now, but Grandma was living with them in a little shotgun house. She was real sick and all of us grandchildren were there. They told us kids to go play and we were across Highway 82 playing and a little white lamb jumped out in front of us (there were none in the country). We all went running to the house to tell them about it. Grandma drew her last breath just as we got to the door. The doctor told us she had had a leakage of the heart for years. Daddy asked why he had not told them. The doctor said that there wasn't a thing that could be done and no use worrying them. No one ever heard her complain. She was in her 80's when she died. I remember her sending me to get her a little black gum limb and helping her make the neatest little toothbrush. She loved apples. She would scrape them with a little knife because she could not chew them. We would eat apples and talk. I wish I could remember the stories she told me.

The Nelms family started out in Mississippi and Georgia during the Civil War. When the Yankees would come through, Grandma said if they had meat in the house or anything good to eat, or valuables, they would bury them in the ground to keep them from taking it. She also told me about slaves and how they were treated, and just lots and lots of stories.

I wish I could remember all of them. She and Grandpa are buried in Hamburg Cemetery. All of the Higginbothams are buried at Promise Land.

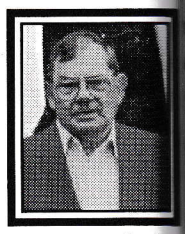
They closed the saw mill at Phelan and Aunt Maggie and Uncle Earl moved back to Mississippi where they both died, but we enjoy going to see cousins around Vaiden, Mississippi. They had five children.

After Raymond was born, we moved on the Easter place, two or three miles from Hamburg off Highway 8. Leonard and Minnie Waits were our closest neighbors. They had six children about our ages. Doris was born there and she had the prettiest black curly hair. Uncle Joe said, "Cora, I've just got to name her." He named her Doris Lezelle. He had been in World War I and spent most of the time in France. Daddy did not have to go to War. He had too many depending on him. When R.D. and Doris built the apartments in Fort Smith on Jenny Lind and Brazil, we named the apartments Lezelle after Doris.

Larie and I were not much help to daddy in trying to farm. Jess Nelms, our cousin, lived with us. He was Uncle Willie's son. He lived with us for room and his eats, very little pay and helped daddy farm while he was with us. He and daddy made me a little wagon. I had a goat they made a harness for and I rode all over the farm in that little wagon with the goat pulling it. I had more fun with it. I think Larie would ride it also.

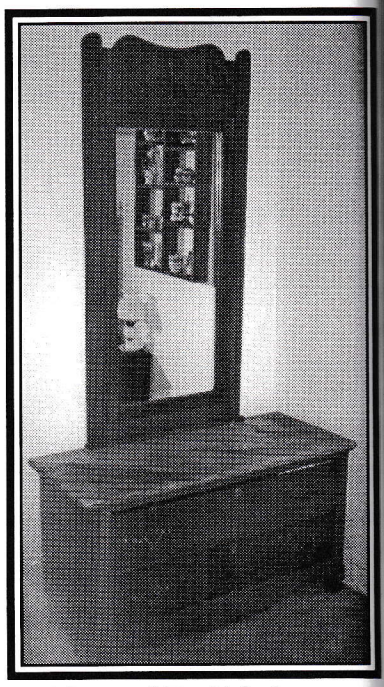
Mr. Waits, Uncle Joe, and several more all were deer hunters and so was Daddy. Daddy got two pretty red hounds and named them Boss and Pearl. They turned out to be the best deer dogs in Ashley County. One Sunday, we were all over at the Waits and when we got home that afternoon, Boss and Pearl had killed my goat. I think I cried a week.

There was a creek about half a mile from our house. Daddy would take Larie and me fishing. One day, he took us fishing and there was a big log across the creek. We were sitting on it and I caught a pretty big fish. There was a knot on the log between Larie and me. She said, "Oh, I got to catch one." When she tried to get over the knot, she fell in. Daddy had to jump in and get her out. This creek was also a swimming hole for the men.



*Harvey Blocker*

Paul and Harvey Blocker, two more cousins, Aunt Allie's sons, would come out real often. They played violin and guitar, and they were really good. Mama and daddy would sing with them. One Sunday, they came out and we had a house full of company. Jess had slipped off swimming, and Paul and Harvey slipped down and got his clothes. We heard someone calling, "Aunt Cora." Mama went to the door and Jess was behind a big tree and wanted her to send him some clothes.



*Mom and Daddy's dresser*

We had another neighbor, named the Strange family. The marble top dresser I have now, daddy bought from them.

Daddy got a chance to move on the Butler place off Highway 8, still neighbors to Leonard and Minnie Waits. We were about 2 1/2 miles from Hamburg. Jess moved with us. He and daddy had more land to farm. He would still plow with horses or mules. We raised just about all we ate. This was about 1928. We walked to school at Hamburg. Finally, Frank Waits bought or made a hack and pulled it with a horse. We rode with him part of the time. Lorene Waits and I were the same age. We were very good friends and still are. We would walk from school to downtown at noon every day. Most of the time we had a nickel and would buy a big dill pickle out of a big wooden barrel and eat it on the way back to school. Clarence, Bill, and Christine were born while living there. Two or three weeks would go by without them

*Daddy and Bertie's fish*

named. So, I named Clarence after a cute blond-headed boy from [illegible] named Clarence Tumilson.

Bill was born in election year, 1928. Mr. Waits, Uncle Dick [illegible], daddy and all the men would stay at the Courthouse until midnight or until all the votes were counted. Daddy was a Democrat from head to toe. We had a good old Judge named Percy G. P. George. He was running again that year and was elected.

Uncle Dick and Aunt Allie had a son born two weeks before Bill and they named their son Percy after the Judge. When Bill was born, daddy named him G. P. after the Judge. I said, "Daddy, I cannot call him G. P. Let's call him Billy." So we did. While he was in the Air Force, he had his name changed to Billy.

*Ben and Cora Nelms, Bertie, Larie, Doris, Raymond, Clarence, Bill, and Cousin Inez Nelms*

There was the Tull family that lived about four miles down Highway 8. They had three girls — Jeffy, Pat, and Ocie Belle. They looked forward to coming to our house in the fall to help daddy pick his cotton and at night we would all sit on the long front porch. Mama and daddy would sing old songs like "Barbara Allen," "Church in the Wildwood," "Great Speckled Bird," "Beautiful Brown Eyes," "Skip to My Lou My Darling," "When the Roll is Called up Yonder," and "The Little Brown Church in the Vail." We would sing until we had to go to bed. Mama's favorite was, "When the Roll is Called up Yonder."

Christine was born on the Butler place in 1932. Women back then didn't go to the doctor, maybe once or nine months. Mama's feet and ankles were swollen and she had gone to the doctor. He said she had uremic poison and was taking medicine for it. She went into convulsions that scared Larie and me to death. Daddy was plowing at that time. We hollered for him, but don't remember who went for Dr. Barnes at Hamburg. He had delivered all of us. He was with another lady having a baby, so Dr. White came. We just knew Mama was going to die and daddy begged me to stay, and I did until I heard the big latch on the gate and I knew it was Miss Minnie or the doctor. Dr. White gave Mama a heaping teaspoon of pure Calimal that killed the poison. Christine was born and Mama was okay. I have always thought the Lord had a hand in this. Dr. Barnes did not believe in giving Calimal. I have thought so many times what would have happened to us seven kids if Mama had died. By the way, I named Christine.

They came out with the big wood wall telephones with a crank on the side. Everyone's number was so many rings. Ours was three rings and there were eight to ten on this one line. The first ring in the morning, every woman would get on the line to see how everyone was doing. They would talk for hours. The Victrolas came out about this time, with a crank on it and a spring inside. You would wind the spring up and it would play. The Carter family was just coming out with records. Daddy would buy one and put it on the Victrola and hold it up close to the telephone so that everyone on the party line could hear it. Mr. Waits would buy the next new record and do the same thing. We could all hear it. I remember daddy buying a record called "The Jake Leg Blues." We wore that one out in no time. Daddy and Uncle Joe could Waltz and two-step. They taught Larie and me to Waltz and two-step, and we had parties similar to square dancing. We were always at someone's home. Mama never did dance, but she and all the kids would be there. She got a kick out of watching us.

It was about this time I learned to play rook and pitch. Daddy was a good pitch player. Mama never played cards, but loved us being home. Lorene and I would always play partners. Sometimes, we would have four or five tables playing out on the porch or in the yard under shade trees in the summer time. Still no fans and no electric.

Lorene and I were winners most of the time. Still just coal oil lamps to read by. She would stay with me one weekend and I would stay with her the next. One weekend, it came a big rain. We pulled our shoes off and waded in the creek between our house and theirs. We were about 14 or 15 and started noticing boys. My first boyfriend was Henry Burgess. He lived back in the woods off Highway 8 about four miles. He had some pretty horses, but he liked to ride this little ole gray mule. He had a certain post he would tie it to when he would come over. We had a wooden picket

fence across the front of our yard with a big wooden latch on the gate.

Lorene's boyfriend was R.C. Bowden. He rode a mule also and they eloped on theirs one day. One day, Henry's mule got out and he was looking everywhere for his mule. It came to our house and was standing at that same post where Henry always tied it. Daddy went out and tied him up and called Henry to come get his mule.

Larie, Raymond and I walked the 2½ miles to school at Hamburg. Sometimes, we rode with Frank Waits. He bought or built a hack that had two seats and pulled it by a horse. When the weather was pretty, we liked to walk. There was a bunch of us — the Chapmans, Spencers, Bierbaums, Greasons and Pittmans — that lived there. We would all be walking and Raymond would get in a scuffle every afternoon. Daddy told him he was going to whip him the next time he got in a scuffle. The next day, he got in a scuffle, fell on a rock and broke his arm. He did not tell anyone. Later in the evening, daddy told him to bring in a load of wood and he had to tell daddy that he broke his arm. I don't think he whipped him because he was broke out with something. We called Dr. Barnes and he came out and set his arm and said, "Measles, chicken pox and a broke arm. I just be d------."

While we lived there, we had the biggest snow we had ever had in Ashley County — four feet. In November, daddy, Mr. Waits, Uncle Joe, there was a bunch that had gone deer hunting, and took Boss and Pearl. We had to shovel snow and make us a path to the barn, out house, wood pile and well. The men came home with several big deer.

Daddy and Mr. Waits always went turkey hunting in the spring and would always kill two or three. They would whittle out their callers. Daddy could take a peach tree leaf and go just like a turkey. We would always have a big turkey dinner at our house or the Waits. This one year, Miss Minnie had the dinner. She made a great big pan of dressing and used about 12 or more eggs. They had invited Dr. Barnes to come out and eat dinner, and he did. We all had the runs, even Dr. Barnes. I spent the night with Lorene that night. We met one another going to the ou house. We never did know why we all got sick, unless the dressing was too rich.

Daddy wrote a song about his deer dogs, Boss and Pearl. He would go around the house singing this song. He also had a deer dog named Ruth. The song went like this:

*I have three puppies*
*Just six months of age,*
*And they have been trailing*
*For a number of days.*

*Old Ruth is my leader,*
*Old Pearl is my strike,*
*Old Boss is my leader*
*When the others fall back.*

*I saddled my horse*
*And went out one day,*
*For deer hunting pleasure*
*To pass the time away.*

*Old Pearl she opened,*
*Ruth she bawled,*
*And just as Boss opened,*
*I spurred old Screwball.*

*I ran him through thickets,*
*I ran him through cane,*
*And I cut off and I killed him*
*In a drizzle of rain.*

*Boss and Pearl*

Screwball was the name of Daddy's horse and he would go around singing this song.

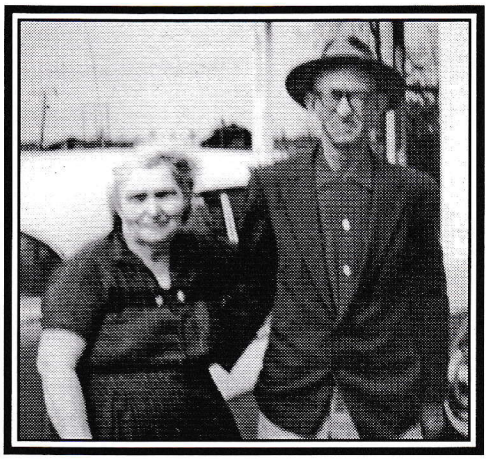
We had several colored people who lived back behind us on this Butler place. The Beals was one family. His wife was named Miriria. We always had cats and dogs. Raymond and Clarence named this one cat Miriria and when Miriria Beal would come over to visit, they would yell, "Scat, Miriria, your tail is on fire." It would embarrass Mama.

One Sunday, we were going somewhere and Mama would get all the kids dressed, then get

*Ben Nelms – "Turkey Hunting"*

dressed herself. She had Christine dressed real cute and handed her to me and said, "Sister, hold her until I get ready." I was walking around outside by the road, Highway 8, and this colored woman came by and said, "Oh, what a pretty white baby. Can I hold her?" I handed Christine to her and she started running with her. Daddy and Jess had to catch her and take Christine from her. She was crazy.

In 1933, we had a terrible flood. Aunt Bessie, one of Mama's sisters, lived out from Montrose, about 20 miles from the Mississippi River. The levy broke and water backed up to their home. All the family stayed with us a week or 10 days until the water went down. That's when they built the levee higher and built the Greenville Bridge they have now.



*Aunt Bessie and Uncle Henry White*

Grandma and Grandpa Higginbotham had a restaurant in Hamburg next to the jail. Lorene's uncle, Mr. Hill, took care of the jail. We would spend weekends with them. Grandpa Higginbotham would let me help him sell candy, gum, cigars, and cigarettes. I thought I was really grown. I was about 12 or 13. Mr. Hill would let us go with him when he carried food up to the prisoners. One weekend we were there, they had a crazy woman in jail. She got to calling dogs and every dog in Hamburg sounded like they were there and we didn't get much sleep.

Grandma Higginbotham could make the best bread puddings. She would make two great big pans, one chocolate and one vanilla, with red food coloring in it. All the customers really loved them. She was a wonderful cook.

All the kids and grandchildren were there one Christmas day. They had everything imaginable on this long dining table. She had collards the day before and she said, "I will warm them up, and someone might eat them." I loved them. I sat down and didn't eat anything but collards. They had to call the doctor and I haven't liked them much since. Aunt Bessie would always plant them and want to give me some. She was short, fat, and had a big stomach. I can just see her laughing and that big stomach was just jumping up and down.

I remember going to a revival at "Promise Land" church when I was 12 or 14 years old. The revival would last two or three weeks. Cousin Nannie Sims, Aunt Ora Nelms' mother shouted up and down the aisles of that little church and did not step on a baby. Babies were on pallets or quilts in aisles. Cousin Nannie had the prettiest white hair and looked just like an angel. I will never forget it. Uncle Charlie Carpenter was leading the singing. That was the first time I had seen anyone shout in a Baptist church.

I think it was the fall of 1932, daddy was cutting wood for winter and missed the wood and cut through his foot. He took blood poisoning and almost died. He was in the hospital in Monticello for weeks. Everyone thought the doctor should have amputated his foot. Dr. Wilson said, "This man has seven children. He needs his foot." He saved it, but it was a long, terrible ordeal. It was months of healing after he came home. Dr. Barnes came out everyday and lanced places on his foot. His foot was swollen, large as a water bucket. Dr. Barnes would give me a piece of cotton with ether on it to hold on daddy's nose. I got sick one time and went out and was sitting on the kitchen steps. Dr. Barnes came looking for me. He said he had been expecting me to get sick, but he said I had done a good job. Daddy could walk by cutting holes in his shoe, but he made a living for us seven kids.

Daddy didn't get to go to school, but he had plenty of common sense and he was a smart man. The Stock Market went way down in 1929. He told Jess they would have to raise plenty to eat. That year, I remember there were lots of tramps and bums coming by just wanting something to eat. I don't remember ever turning them away hungry. I remember we had a big corn crop, potatoes, ribbon cane syrup, always plenty of turnips, greens and sweet potatoes.

Daddy and Jess dug a big hole on the south side of a hill and put sweet potatoes and turnips in it and covered it with dirt, and they did not freeze. That was the first time I had seen our mother make hominy (this was 1930). We had two big iron pots in the yard. We helped her shell the corn, put them in the pots and boiled it until the husk would come off. Then she canned jars and jars of hominy. They killed several hogs and made lots of sausage, fried them, put them in jars and poured hot grease over them and sealed them, and they would keep all winter. They would cure the rest.

Mama would make comforters out of old worn-out wool pants and shirts, tacked with heavy yarn to hold it together, so we never slept cold. Three or four of us kids would sleep together. Still no electric. We used coal oil lamps. No gas. We just had wood to heat our house and use in the cook stove. We had a dug well. Mama would put her butter in a pail with a handle, tie a rope on it and drop the butter down in the dug well to keep cool. Twice a year, a Watkins man would come around selling spices, vanilla, cloverine salve, and just lots of things like that. I think he took chickens or eggs for pay.

We had to make things to play with. I remember making a cat's cradle and Jacob's ladder with pieces of string tied together and put on both hands. We had a big fruit jar full of all sizes and colors of buttons. We picked out four large, flat, round buttons, cut a piece of string two feet long, poked the string through one button hole going one way, then through the second button hole going the other way. We then tied the two ends together with buttons in the center, placed a loop of string around each thumb and twirled the button string around and around by pulling our thumbs back and forth. We were able to keep the button spinning forward and backward so fast that it hummed. We would cut paper dolls out of Sears Roebuck catalogs.

Daddy would get all the kids together, blow out the coal oil lamp, and tell them stories. One I remember was about "Knotty Jack," the strippiest, prettiest cat you had ever seen. I wish I could remember all of it. They would all get so excited. Seems they were all down in a cave, way down in the ground. The moral of it was about Satan or the boogie man. Knotty Jack had knots all over him and he was the ugliest thing you ever saw. When they did something that they should not have done, they would say, "Up Jack, don't bite my ear. What do you want?" It was a long, long story, but the kids would always want daddy to tell them about Knotty Jack. Back then, I think they really believed in "Ghosts." Daddy and Uncle Joe could tell some awful ones. Uncle Joe said he knocked a ghost down with a stick of wood one time where someone had gotten killed.

The boys used cardboard boxes making tents, pretending they were cars or trains or boats, whichever took their fancy. We entertained ourselves with practically nothing. Making mud pies, blowing bubbles with soapy water, or an empty wooden spool could keep us busy for hours. We didn't have a lot of toys back in the depression years, but we had a lot of imagination.

Mama raised all seven of us until we were grown. She used a big iron pot to boil the clothes in. She used a cut off broom handle to poke the boiling clothes down with. She had to draw the water or pump it; in later years, we had a pump. She rubbed the clothes on a rub board, rinsed them two or three times, then she would hang them on a long clothes line to dry. It would take all day. She made her own soap most of the time. She took ashes from the fireplace and put them in a big barrel. She added lye, water, and bacon grease together and poured over the ashes and let it drip into buckets, and it made good soap. The only starch she had was flour. She mixed it with boiling water and starched our clothes and hung them on the line to dry. She would sprinkle the starched clothes with water. Then she would iron them with two or three cast-iron irons heated on the old wood stove. The irons had handles. If starch built up on the irons, she would break the branches off of cedar trees and rub the irons over the cedar branches until they were like new.

*Daddy and Mama*

Mama would see that we always had plenty of milk and butter. She loved to churn and sing. She would keep time with the dasher, most of the time singing "When the Roll is Called up Yonder." We had no refrigerators or no ice. Most of the time, we drank all the milk, but if we had more milk and butter than we could use, we would put it in a big bucket, tie a rope on the handle and lower it down in the dug well to keep it cool. She had a butter mold, and when she turned it upside down, it had a flower indented in it. The last one she had, Uncle Louie, her brother, made for her. Daddy would always brag on her biscuits. She had a great big dough board that was Grandma Nelms mother's. It was made out of an old log, about 30" long, hollowed out in the middle. Since I am the oldest child, they always said it would be mine. I have it on the wall now. She would sift the flour out of a big flour bin, put in the baking powder, salt, soda,

lard and either buttermilk or clabbered milk. She used her hands to mix it up. She never measured anything. She would pull the flour from the sides of the dough board until she had a mound of the dough. She pinched off the dough and placed them in a long bread pan that had been greased with bacon fat. She would lay the biscuits down in the pan to get a little grease on them and flip them over. That made a crust on both sides. Then she would put them in the oven of our old wood stove and the biscuits would come out a golden brown. Daddy would say, "Mother, those biscuits would make you slap your pappy." Jess would brag on them. We always had fried ham or bacon, eggs, ribbon cane syrup, and most of the time, white or red eye gravy. Daddy always made the coffee. He would put the water and coffee in a pot and let it boil. He always got up and built a big fire in the fireplace and cook stove. He always kept plenty of wood. Mama never cooked on anything but a wood stove. That may have been why everything tasted so good. Mama made cornbread for dinner. While the oven was hot, she baked an oven full of sweet potatoes. We would come in from school starved to death and a baked potato or piece of cornbread sure tasted good.

*Grandma and Grandpa Higginbotham and sons Lawrence and Louie*

Daddy wasn't bad to drink, but at Christmas, he would make him an egg nog. He would offer us a taste, but he used raw eggs in it and we wouldn't taste it. That Christmas Eve, we all went to town (Hamburg) like we did every Saturday, and stood around and talked. That day there was an old man walking around with a white mare, trying to sell it for $10, I guess to have Christmas. Daddy gave him $10 and told Jess they could use it when he started his crop. They took the old mare home and put it in the stable. Christmas morning, it couldn't get up. Jess and Daddy kept trying to get it up. Jess said, "Uncle Ben, give us another shot of that egg nog. I believe we can get her up." But they didn't. She died that day. We didn't get much for Christmas, maybe an orange, apple, some candy and nuts. We made our dresses, blouses and underwear out of 50-100 lbs. flour sacks that were a pretty floral print.

We studied by coal oil lamps. We played Annie over, threw a ball over the house, played jacks and hop scotch, and cut out dolls from the Sears catalog. We also used the catalog for toilet paper at the outdoor toilet.

Grandpa Higginbotham would always say "Christmas Eve gift" to everyone that came into the restaurant on Christmas Eve. No one ever beat him. He had the prettiest white hair and mustache. He always trimmed it short and neat. He loved boiled okra, but because of his mustache, we kids could not watch him eat it. That turned us against boiled okra. Lots of men then wore long turned-up mustaches.

All the water was from dug wells. Everyone had a wood shelf on the front porch with a big bucket and dipper or gourd. Everyone drank out of the same dipper. If Larie or I would see all the long-mustached men drinking water, we would do without or drink on the other side of the dipper.

Uncle Tom Collins was married to Aunt Dully, Grandma's sister. They had ten or twelve children.

This is about the time Aunt Mary, Mama's baby sister, met Uncle Paul Tiner. He came with a bunch of men working on a pipe line. One or two of them had guitars, and they would play at night, mostly Jimmy Rogers and Roy Acuff tunes. I guess that is why I still like country music. Aunt Mary and Uncle Paul married and had four children.

*Aunt Mary and Uncle Paul Tiner*

After this, daddy decided we would move down close to Aunt Bessie and Uncle Henry White in Montrose. There was lots of cotton to pick and they needed people to help pick it. So Larie and I picked cotton. I could pick 200 or 250 pounds of cotton a day. I think we got 10 cents a pound. We were neighbors to the Woods family. Odell and Ozell were identical twins. They both had the prettiest red hair. We would pick cotton with them all week, then we would go to parties on weekends. We had lots of fun. Odell is our Billie Selby's mother. We lived there a year, then moved to the Cone place eight miles north of Snyder. We just had one road out there and the WPA was working on

it. They had to build new bridges and new roads. It took them two or three years to finish it.

There were 15 or 20 families that lived out there with lots of young folks and all of them farmed. We had to walk about half a mile up Buck Run Hill to catch the school bus, because it could not get up the hill. It would be late just about every morning. We nearly froze to death because we didn't have half enough clothes. We rode the bus to Snyder Grade School and to Portland High School.

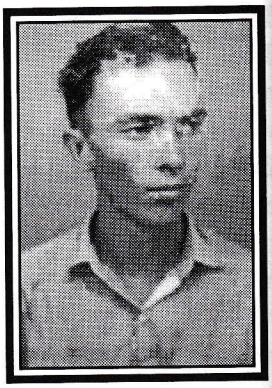
The McDuffies were our neighbors. There were six of them — LaVerne was my age, Georgia Lee was Larie's age, Lillie Bell, Orville, Jumbo, and Bunk. They caught the school bus with us.

This was 1933 and we still used coal oil lamps and wood stoves. We still had our Victrola and still had our play parties in peoples' homes. There were lots of young folks that lived out there — Osbornes, Corders, Ross, Roberts, and Streeters. I can remember having ice cream parties and buying ice in big blocks. We didn't have enough ice cream freezers so we used a wash tub. We put ice in it and our ice cream buckets (about four to the tub) and turned the buckets in the tub of ice until it was frozen.

Parker Bawcom and Cooksie Birchfield were the first boys to get Model "T" cars. Mama and daddy let Larie and me go with Parker in his Model "T" down to Cooksie's to a party. LaVerne and Georgia Lee McDuffie went with us. We started home and the car went dead. It would not move. We all had to walk home, about six miles. Mama and daddy were walking the floor. They just knew we had had a wreck. I think it was 2 o'clock in the morning when we got home. Mama was wringing her hands, crying and praying.

There was a community called Trafalger, just a church and cemetery. We Baptist would have church in the morning and the Church of Christ would have church in the afternoons. The Bawcoms, Turnages and several more were Church of Christ. One winter, the road got so bad, that we had school in the church. It had a big pot-belly wood stove in it.

I had my first experience with death here on the Cone place. We had neighbors named Sedberry. Two of their children ate too many fresh-dug, raw peanuts and had acute congestion. They were about six and seven years old and both died. No funeral homes were close, so the men made the caskets out of wood. LaVerne and I made the little girl's dress to be buried in. She was a beautiful little girl. We finished the dress and Mama went with us to dress her. We got pretty little socks to match the dress. Mama put one sock on. I had the other one and I guess she could see that I was afraid to touch her. She said, "Sister, just slip it on her foot." So I did and have never been afraid to touch a dead person since. There was no such thing as embalming back then. They put two nickels on their eyes for a few hours to keep them closed. For grown people, they used quarters on their eyes. We sat up with them that night. They were buried at Trafalger Cemetery.



*Delton Carpenter*

Delton Carpenter was helping daddy farm that year. He was an orphan boy and needed a home. He was a nice young man. He took the flu and he asked me to make a seared cloth to put on his chest. I had watched Mama take a flannel cloth and put Vicks salve, turpentine, talor and coal oil on it. So I fixed Delton one. The next morning, he was blistered in the shape of the cloth. He got over the flu, but didn't ask me to make another seared cloth. A few years later, he went into the CCC Camp (Civilian Conservation Corp.) and paid $30 a month and room and board. When World War II broke out, he went into the Army and was killed the next year.

LaVerne McDuffie was a beautiful girl. She loved the outdoors. She would kill more squirrels than any of the men. She killed all the stray cats. On Sunday evenings, we all ganged up and carved our names on trees.

*Aunt Ora, Bertie and Aunt Mary*

Uncle Joe and Aunt Ora Nelms lived out from Monticello. They had a car and they would come and get me every summer. I would stay a couple of weeks and have a good time. The summer of 1933, LaVerne went with me. She visited her half brother who lived in Monticello. While we were up there, her dad was killed on a hay bailer. She worshipped him.

Things were really getting rough on her family and mine. Field work was all there was. Daddy

borrowed money from Mr. Quinton Cone to make a crop and buy our groceries and what clothes and shoes we wore. They always had to order the shoes. Mine were always too narrow, but I would keep them regardless, because it would take three or four weeks to return them. I have bunions on both big toes now from wearing those shoes. Daddy would always go to town and bring us kids a sack of candy. He would always go to town in the wagon. We could hear him singing before we could hear the wagon. He always got home before dark because he knew Mama was afraid to stay by herself. He always had a sack of candy for the kids. One of the sweetest memories I have of him is walking around humming or singing.

*Bertie going to Camden*

Mrs. McDuffie had a sister who lived in Cullendale Suburb of Camden. They had a paper mill and bag mill there. Her sister was Sudie Allison. Sudie's husband Homer worked at the paper mill and so did their son, Woodard. Sudie wrote that they were going to start hiring at the bag mill. So LaVerne and I went to Cullendale in 1933, and stayed with Homer and Sudie. They had a daughter, Gwen, going to school. She shared her bedroom with us for two or three months until we got on at the bag mill and saved enough to get us an apartment not too far from them. It was close enough that we could walk to work. Homer had built them a three-bedroom home and it had real pretty landscaping. It was at the edge of town and didn't have plumbing yet, so they had a two-holer outside. They were the nicest people. Sudie was a wonderful cook. We all got off from work about 4 o'clock. Sudie would have the best meal ready for us to eat. She would have pork chops, ham or steak, potatoes, gravy, vegetable, hot biscuits, and always pie. She could bake the best chocolate and coconut pies that I have ever eaten. She baked them in the crust like a custard. This was really a treat for LaVerne and me because we were used to eating what was left from dinner. When we got through eating, Gwen would grab me by the hand and we would go to the two-holer and sit and talk until Sudie and LaVerne washed the dishes. They were Assembly of God. We went to Brother Tanner's church in Camden and enjoyed it. We didn't see much of Woodard. He was dating Lucille and they got married several months later.

*Sudie Allison*

They had a union (AFL) at the paper mill and bag mill, so LaVerne and I had to join it. They put me on a machine with Willard Andrews. He was president of the Union. His machine stayed broken down half the time. My job was to use the lever to cut the bags in two. When the machine was down, I would work at the reclaim table, repairing bags that didn't glue. We made different size bags. A lot of them were fertilizer bags and feed bags. They had to be taken off the conveyer by hand and stacked. LaVerne worked doing that and she would not let any of the men lift more than she. She passed away a few years ago.

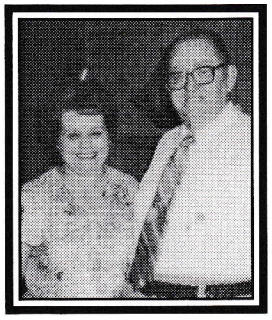
I will never forget how homesick I would get. Not too many people had cars. We would have to ride the bus to Snyder and daddy would meet us in the wagon. They were building a new highway between Eldorado and Crossett and the bus would have to detour three or four times. I would cry when I got home and cry when I left.

The kids were all so cute. I had bought a camera. All the kids needed clothes so bad. I remember ordering some blue coveralls and stripped ones for Billy and Clarence and I took their picture. They looked so cute. I would take all of them something for a couple or three years. All I had left when I paid my rent and bought groceries, I would spend on them. Mama was always so good to write to me. Every week as long as she lived, I got a postcard or letter from her. Postcards were one cent and letters were three cents.

Our mother's happiest times were when she had all of us kids home. In later years when we all had cars, we liked to surprise her. No matter what time of night we got home, there was always something to eat. We always had cornbread and milk in the warmer above the big wood stove. We had leftovers that really tasted good.

While LaVerne and I were in Cullendale, we went to church with the Allisons. Gwen was dating Ted Singleton. Brother Tanner was his uncle. Ted and Gwen both went to college. Ted became an Assembly of God minister. They got married and had three sons. Ted pastored a church in California for 30 years, then

retired in Eugene, Oregon where one of their sons had moved. They always came to see us when they came to Arkansas. Smitty and I have been to Oregon two or three times to see them. The last time we were there, they took us trout and salmon fishing. I caught a 25-lb. and a 15-lb. salmon and Gwen canned it for me to bring home.



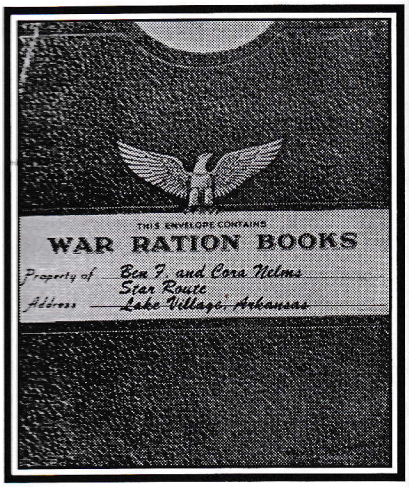
*Gwen & Ted Singleton*

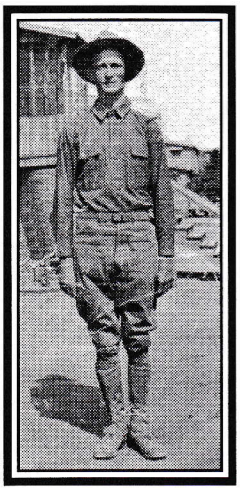
I came to Fort Smith in 1943 and went to work at Fort Chaffee working in #8 P.X. There were no apartments then, but the people in Fort Smith were so nice to share their large homes for people to live in. It was always upstairs. The big old houses are still here. We would drive to Fort Chaffee. Sometimes, we would go out Rogers Avenue. There weren't three businesses from Free Ferry to Fort Chaffee. Sometimes, we would go on Towson Avenue and Highway 22. There weren't half a dozen businesses from Dodson to Fort Chaffee. So I have seen Fort Smith grow to be a much larger town, but I still think it is a wonderful place to live. I was in Fort Smith about eight years when my family started moving up here.

My brother Bill was the first to come up when he finished high school in Lake Village, Arkansas. He and Vyrl Guest had dated several years. Bill stayed with me and worked at Sears Roebuck until he and Vyrl got married on June 4, 1950.

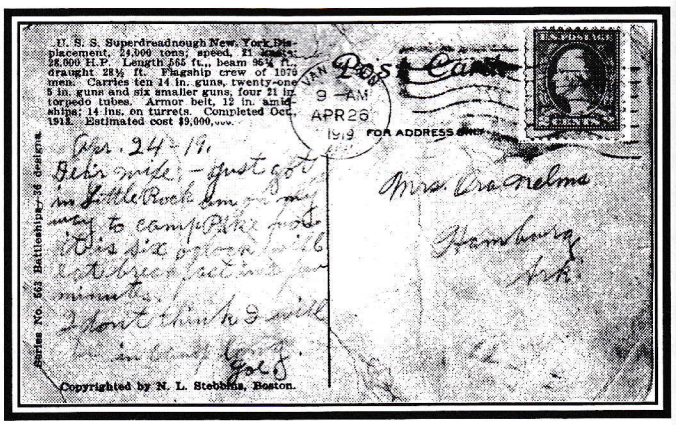
Rev. Dale Perry preached a sermon in November 1997 titled, "Tribute to your parents," that made me wish I could have paid tribute to mine. I think they knew I loved them and appreciated what they did — how they worked and sacrificed to raise the seven of us and see that we got enough education to make a living for ourselves. I know no one is perfect, but our mother was as near perfect as anyone could be. I never saw her wash, iron, sew a button on, or work in the garden or yard on Sunday. I never heard her say a curse word other than, "Oh my God," and she was calling on God then to help her. All she did on Sundays was cook for us kids. When she was growing up, they did their cooking on Saturday for Sunday. Our mother was a diabetic. She was taking insulin — it had just come out. She was taking shots, but she had a massive stroke and was in the hospital two days before she died in Lake Village Hospital. It was the first time she was ever in the hospital. Her funeral was the first one held in the New Baptist Church in Montrose, Arkansas. We buried her on March 1, 1958 on her 67th birthday. The church did not hold half the people. Our dad died in August of 1968 at the age of 75 with acute leukemia. He lived about three months after we found out he had it. Our dad and mother never had money, but they had so many friends, loved ones, and seven children who loved them and we know they loved us. I know they are in heaven just waiting for us. I pray we will never have another depression.

Herbert Hoover was our President. Lots of banks closed. Lots of things were rationed — you were issued a ration book with coupons. You would have to stand in line to get sugar, tea, coffee, gasoline, and just about everything was rationed. I remember standing in line at Sears to get nylon hose in 1943 when I moved to Fort Smith. I hope this will show the younger generation how bad things were during the depression.



*Uncle Joe Nelms, World War I*


U. S. S. Superdreadnough New York. Displacement, 24,000 tons; speed, 21 knots; 28,000 H.P. Length 565 ft., beam 95½ ft., draught 28½ ft. Flagship crew of 1079 men. Carries ten 14 in. guns, twenty-one 5 in. guns and six smaller guns, four 21 in. torpedo tubes. Armor belt, 12 in. amid-ships; 14 ins. on turrets. Completed Oct. 1914. Estimated cost $9,000,000.
Series No. 563 Battleships—36 designs.
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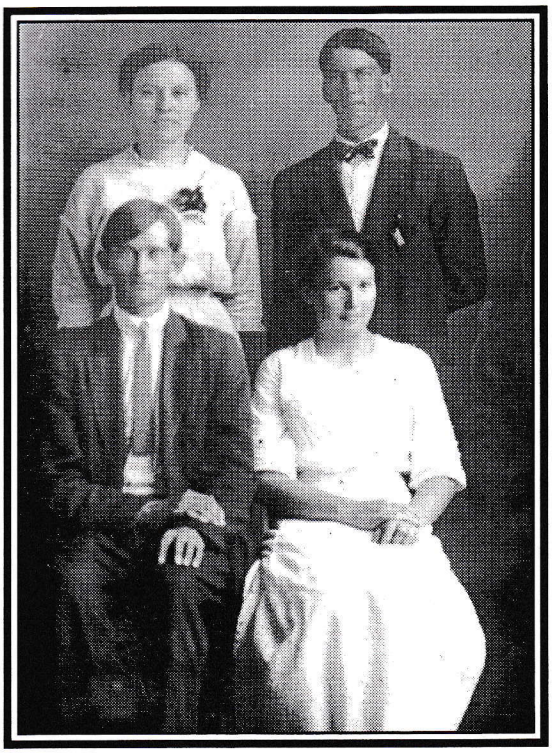
*Joe Nelms' World War I postcard*

*Florance Thomas and Cora Higginbotham*

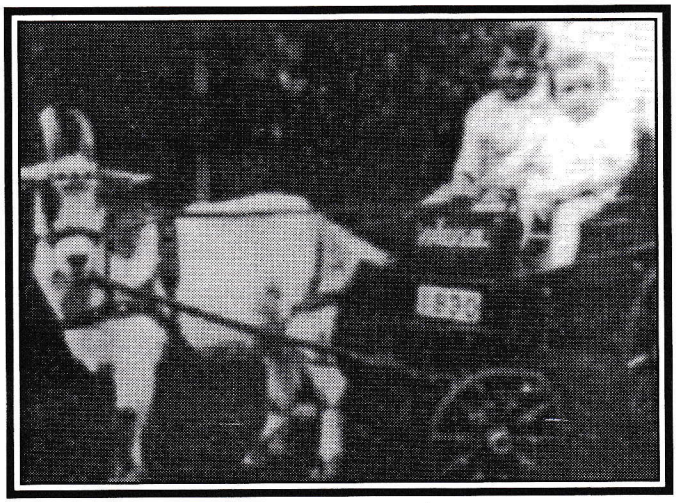
*Ben Nelms*

*Aunt Bessie and Mama*

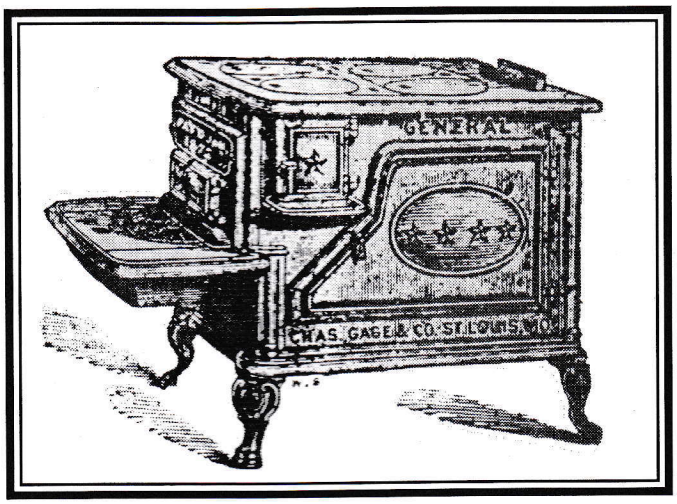
*Aunt Maggie Nelms*



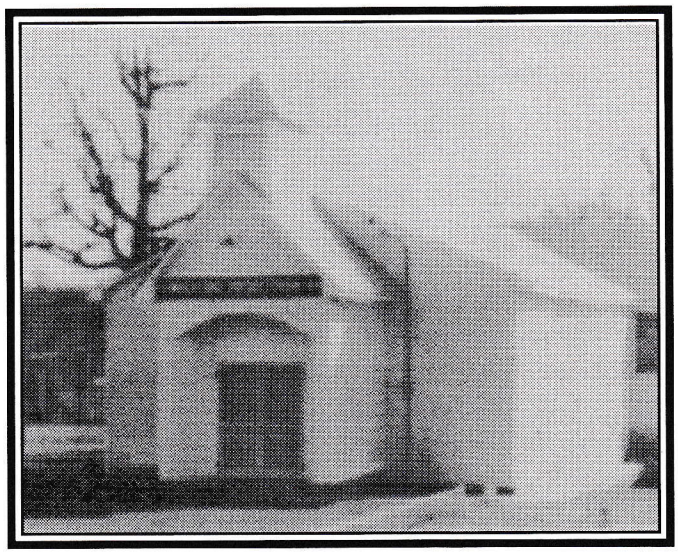
*Mama and Aunt Ora dated Pierce brothers before they married Nelms brothers.*



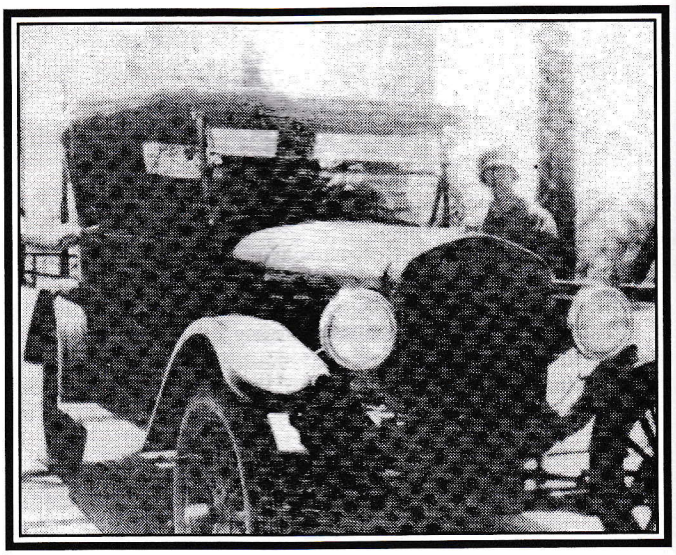
*Bertie in wagon pulled by a goat*



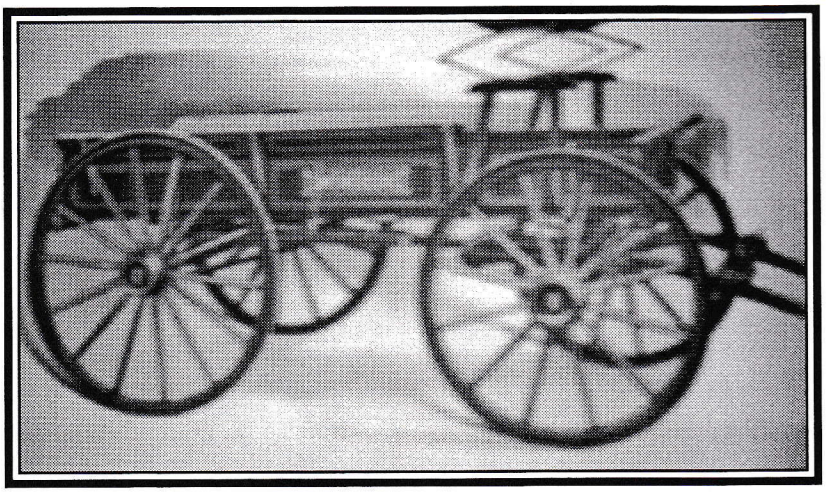

*Our heating stove*



*Country church*

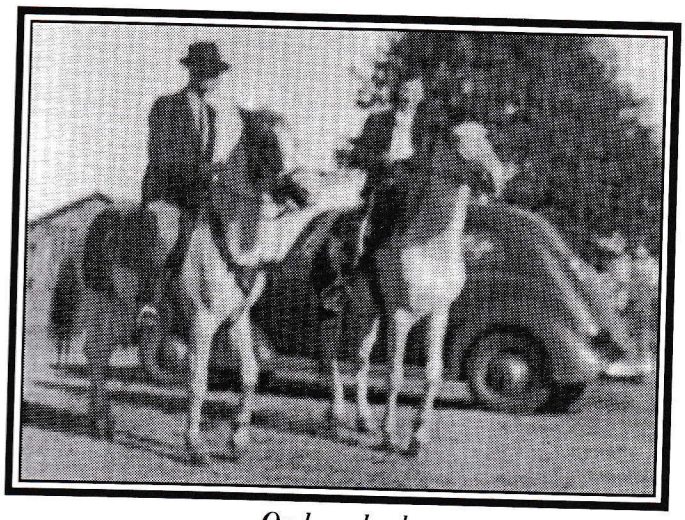


*First automobile ride*



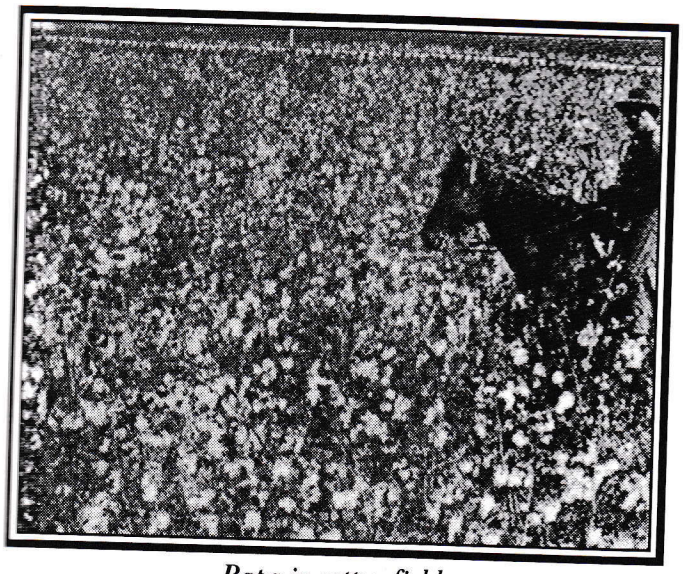
*Daddy's farm wagon*

*Horse and carriage*

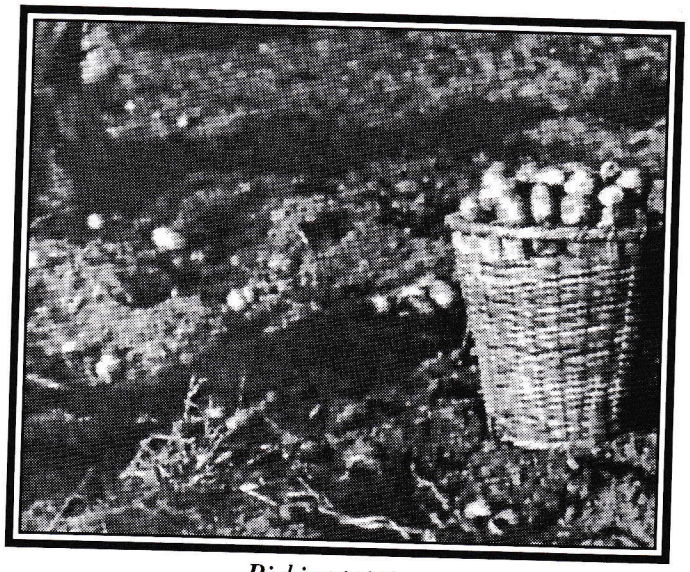


*On horseback*

*Horse and wagon*

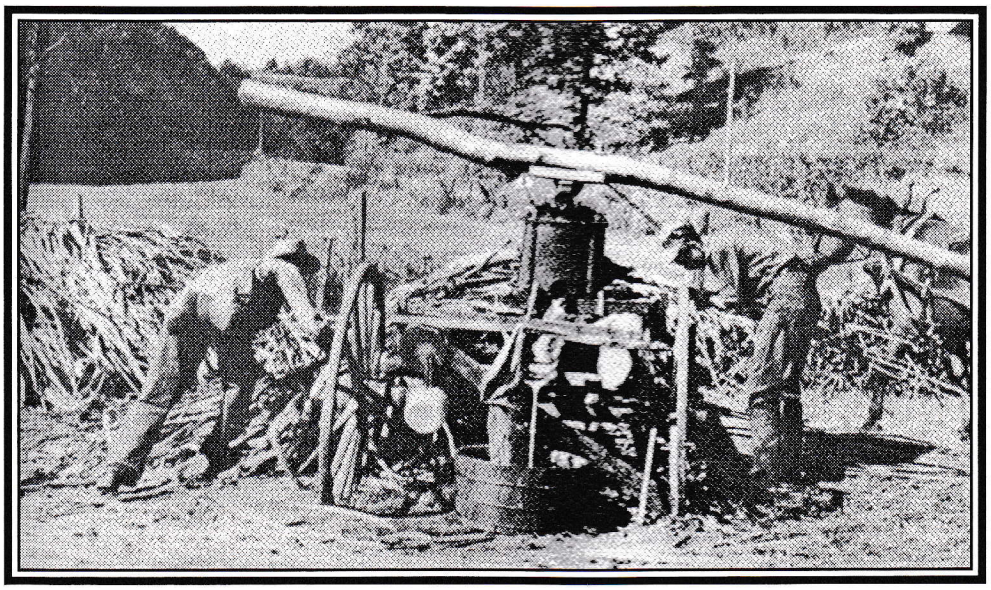


*Papa in cotton field*

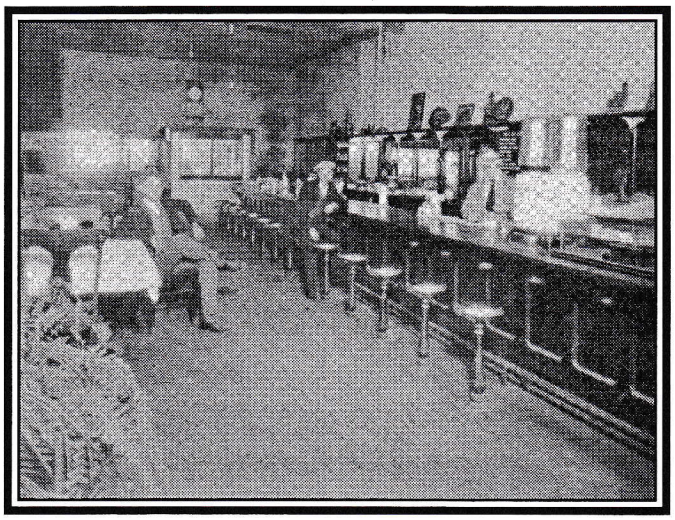


*Picking potatoes*

*Decorating the Christmas tree with popcorn on a string*



*Squeezing sugar cane juice for sorghum.*

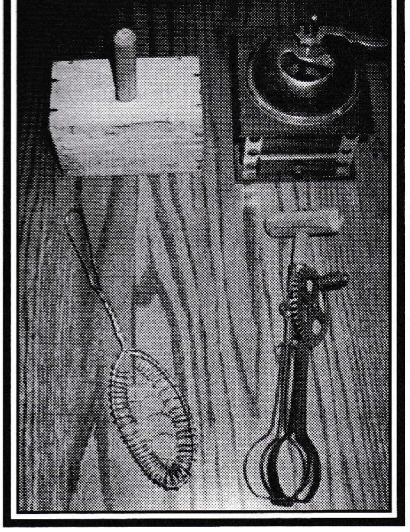


*Hamburg restaurant*

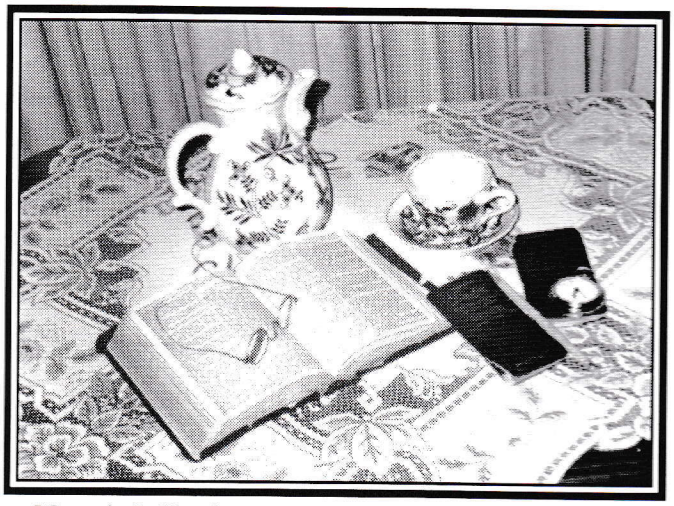
*Sunday dinner at Mama and Daddy's with the Waits family*

*Larie and Leo White – cousins – Cone place*

*Telephone on an 8-party line*

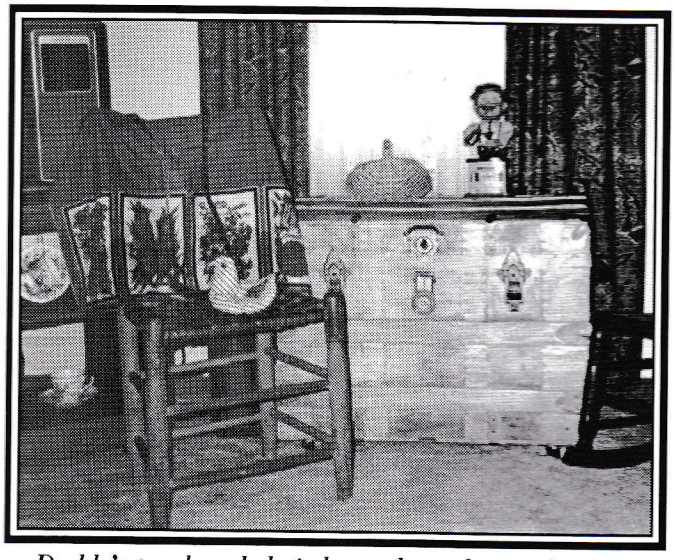


*Mama's butter mold, coffee grinder and egg beaters*

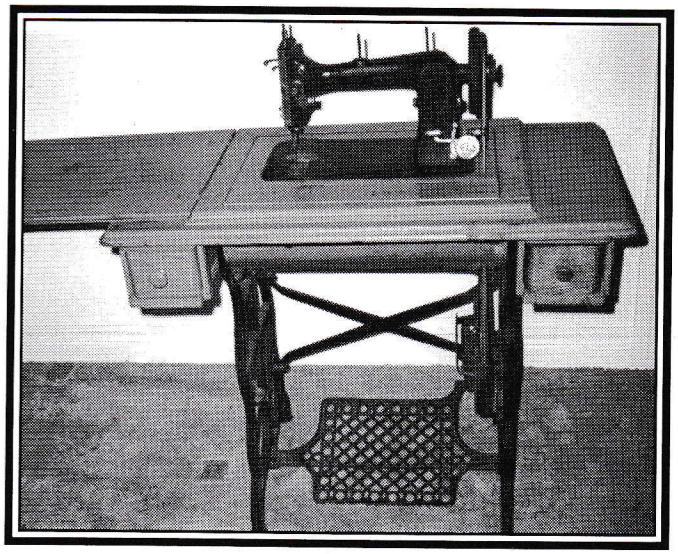


*Mama's Bible, Grandpa Nelms' glasses and date book, Daddy's straight razor and Bill's watch*

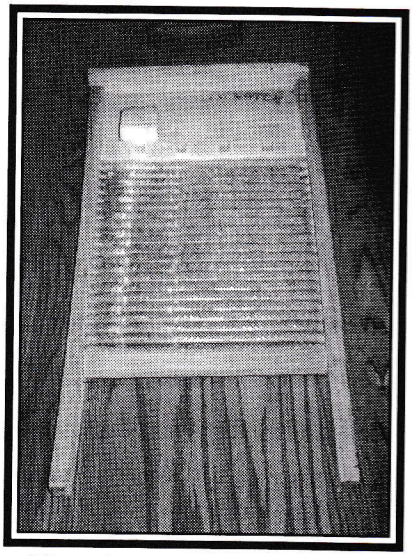
*Mama's kitchen variety*



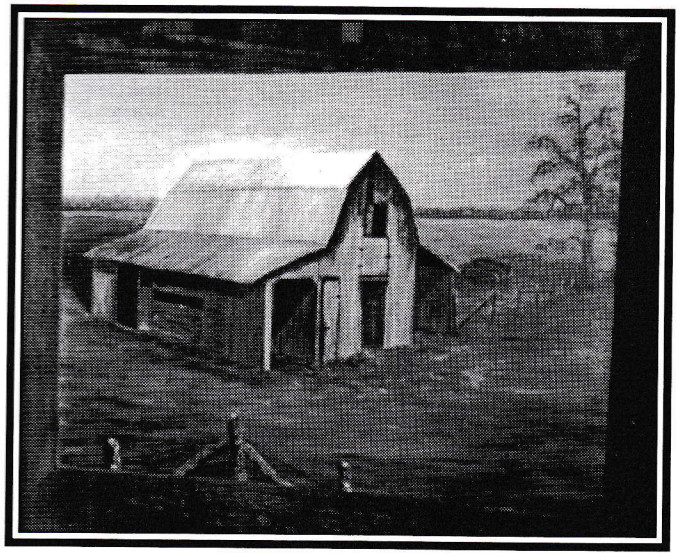
*Daddy's trunk and chair he made, and mama's apron*



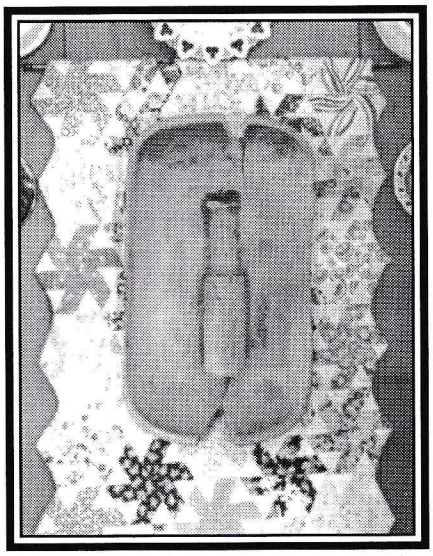
*Aunt Maggie's sewing machine*



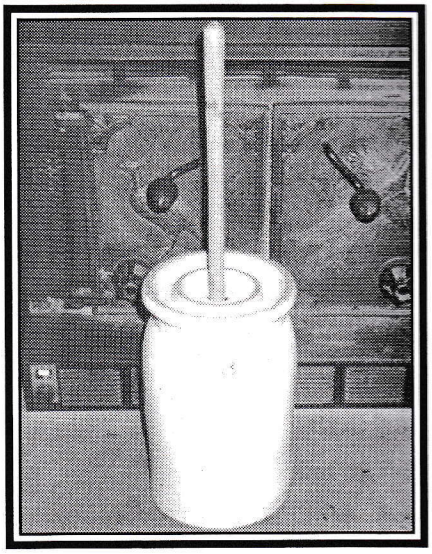
*Mama's rub board and lye soap*



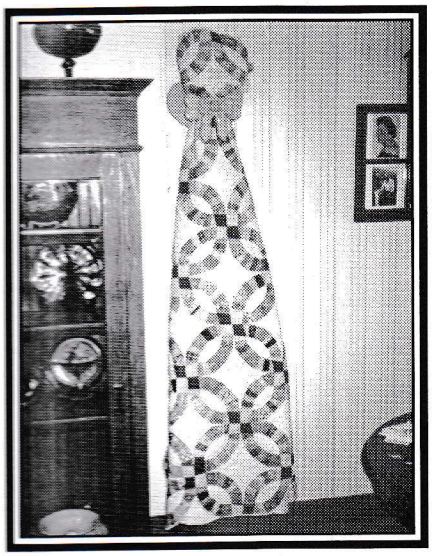
*Daddy's barm*



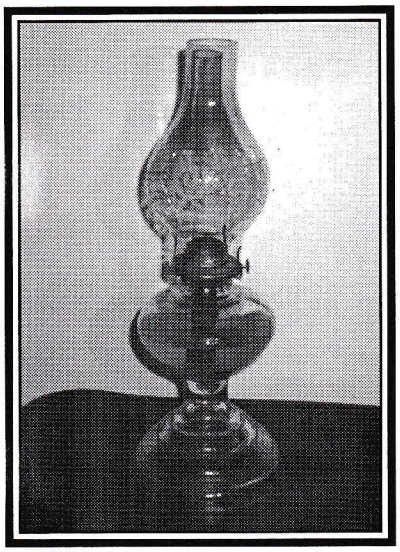
*Dough bowl and rolling pin*



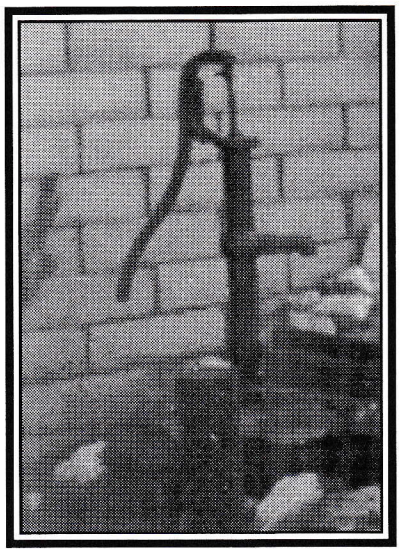
*Mama's churn*



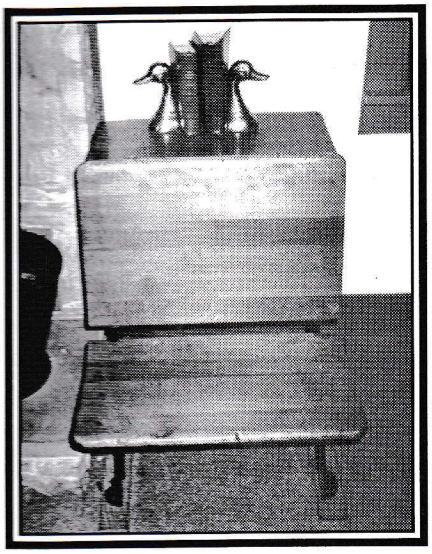
*Aunt Ora's quilt*



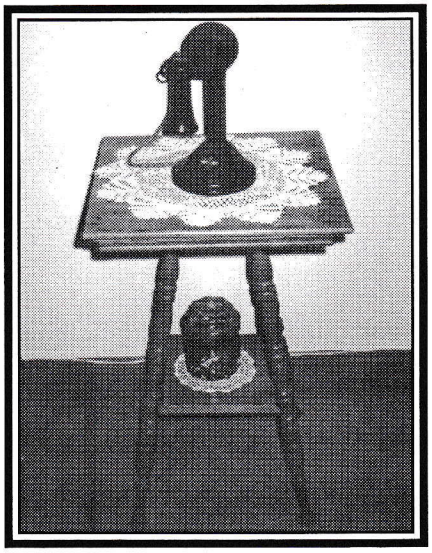
*Mama's coal oil lamp*



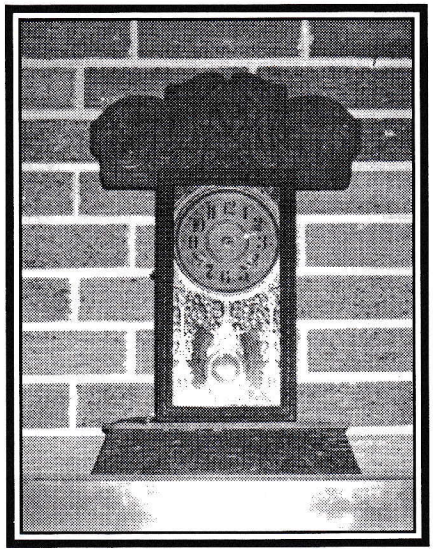
*Farm water pump*



*School desk*



*Aunt Ora's table*



*Grandpa Nelms' clock*

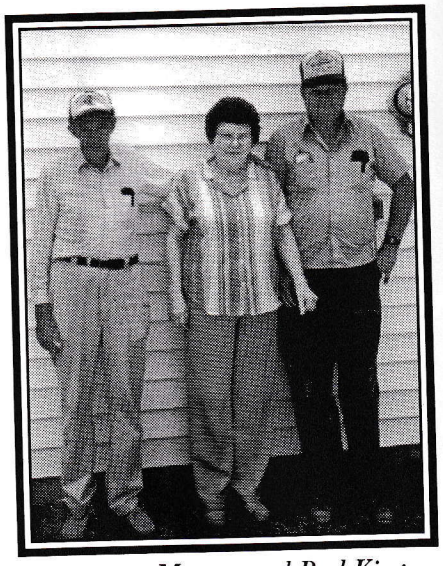
*Smitty and Bertie*
*35th Wedding Anniversary*

*Aunt Bessie and Uncle Henry White family*

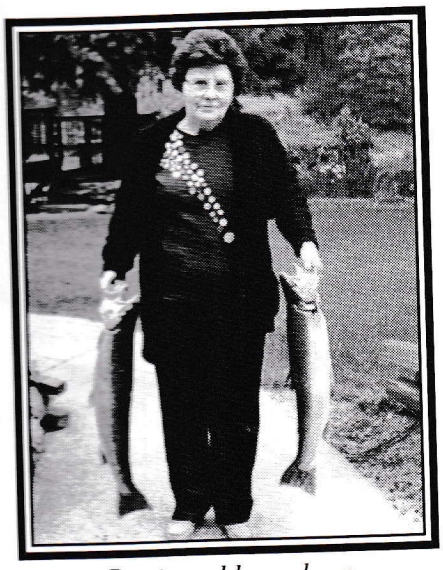
*Uncle Gastons' family*

*Maxine Johnson, Aunt Eunice Higginbotham, Abe's wife, Abe Jr., and Bertie. Maxine and Abe are Aunt Eula Maud's (mama's sister) children.*

*Cousins*



*Cousins, Monroe and Bud King with Bertie*



*Bertie and her salmon*

*Aunt Ora and Aunt Maggie*

Dear Bill,

I am John McDuffie. I remember you from the old days. I hope you will not feel slighted when I say I remembered other members of the Nelms family better because you were of less age than me and those other members. If you moved from the cone place at age 11 in 1940, then I saw you last 59 years ago.

I was pleased to be invited to your family gathering on June 26. A great pity that you could not come. I have had news of your career down through the years. As we grow older, it's good to be able to reflect that we have been blessed in having good families, good friends, and a good measure of success in life. Most of all to have produced something that is worthwhile as well as lasting. This last, referring to your family (children) there you have me beaten.

I much enjoyed seeing Berti & Larie, Doris and Clarence at the gathering. I was anxious to have a copy of your book which mainly deals with your families struggles during the depression years. My family was right beside you. A very commendable feature of that story is the straight forward truths involved in its telling. Anything less would have deprived you of the opportunity to give your Dad and Mom the credit they deserved . Very god job indeed. I say you can be well satisfied with this record you have for future Nelms.

Now I would like to tell you a few things especially of your father, that I well remember. Mr Ben was different from other fathers. I remember those days. He enjoyed playing baseball and other games with us kids. He also had a great sense of humor, and laughed a lot. I bet I could recognize his laugh if I heard it in a crowd even now.

We lost our father to a farm accident in 1935. I was 10, Lillie Bell was 8 and William (Bunk) was 12. Bunk turned 13 Jan 31 1936, and started as head of house that spring. Think of that, not only a depression but foreclosure with loss of all assets plus a 13 year old kid starting a crop on his own. I am glad I was so young, otherwise I'd have been very depressed.

Larie has lately told me stories of your father disappearing from his work in the field, and when asked where he had been said he had been over with Bunk offering any help he could. Hearing Larie's story I readily recalled hearing Bunk and our mother at night talking about what had been done, and should be done next as to plowing etc. I remember Bunk saying that Mr. Ben said this or Mr. Ben said that. All this connected with Larie's story about the amount of time your father spent away from his own work.

I remember an event that was strictly between me and Mr. Ben. I was probably 13 and as usual was squirrel hunting, this time along Big Bayou. As I moved quietly along the edge of the water just up stream from Little Bayou, I saw the movement of what had to be a squirrel at the base of an old Cypress stump. Thank goodness I had the 22 with shorts and not the shotgun. When I walked up to pick up my squirrel, it had actually been a mink that I knew had to belong to Mr. Ben. I had much fear about the consequences of all this. I felt certain that he would be along soon, so I just waited. When he came, I just told him I'd taken his mink for a squirrel. Funny, I can remember exactly what was said then, but laid my pen down a few minutes ago and could not

find it when I came back. Anyway, he just asked where the mink was hit. I said in the head and he said you didn't damage the skin. You can imagine my relief at his reaction. There was no irritation in his voice or anything. As a matter of fact I ended up following him around his entire trap line. He took up several traps and moved them a few feet and as he reset them, he explained what he was doing and why. As I think back, I know that he did that mainly to show me How to trap mink, which he knew I was very interested in.

The potato house was mentioned by some of you in telling your stories. As I recall, it was built partly in an excavation in the hillside, hence was a very good storm protection. My mother was exceedingly afraid of storms and us kids only slightly less so. I recall that as we all crowded into the potato house Mr. Ben stood in the door and told us what the clouds were doing. All of us relied upon him to ease our fears of the storms and lightening.

I could go on and on about your dad and other members but I have probably already tired you out.

My heartfelt regards to you, John R. McDuffie

p.s. Each Sunday as our service starts the preacher asks for prayer requests. I gave your name Sunday. I hope that meets with your approval.

Vyrl, Bills widow, recieved this letter sometime after Bro. Bills death.
The McDuffie's were our neighbors when we lived on the Cone place. John's sister Laverne and I, Bertie, left the farm together and went to Camden Ark. to work in the bag mill and stayed with Laverne's Aunt and Uncle Homer and Sudie Allison.